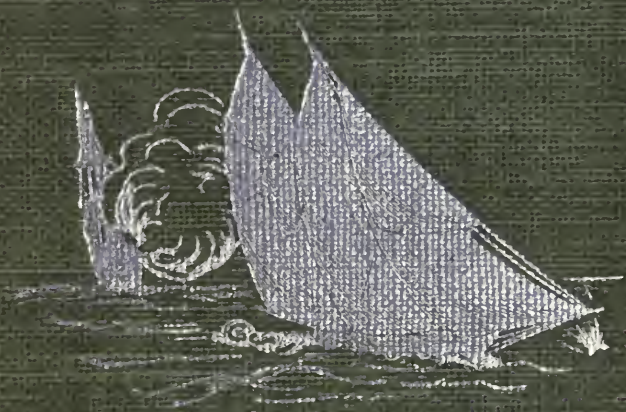
THE THREE RICHARD WHALENS



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The
Three Richard Whalens

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The Three Richard Whalens

A STORY OF ADVENTURE

BY
JAMES KNAPP REEVE
Author of "Vawder's Understudy."

Illustrated by E. Frederick

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THE THREE RICHARD WHALENS.

CHAPTER I.

I AM not intending to trouble you with much ancient lore, but to get as speedily as may be into the swing of events that happened within my own day, and within yours, if you are old enough to have a brush of down upon your lip. For I know full well that to hark back into the dead centuries where lie buried joys and strifes is but dull business, and one for which we get small thanks. I will even go a step further, and say to you impatient ones who read a story but for the story's sake, that maybe you will not be the losers if you chance to skip these dozen pages, and so get directly at the heart of things.

But, just as a horse limbers himself along the quarter-stretch before going to the pole, that he may take the track the more surely and speedily when fairly into the race, so will I here make myself certain to go more straight in that which follows, by a brief prelude, which I will have as little dreary as may be.

When a story is two hundred years old, and has come down from generation to generation by word of mouth, one can hardly vouch for the complete accuracy of all its details. So I will spare you much of that which seems to be mere romance, or the candour of which may even be questioned, and tell you only so much as I know to be true. Having given you this word to attest mine honesty, I trust you will let its very ingenuousness be but the fuller proof of the artlessness of the reciter. And if you are minded to complain that it is all too little, I will answer that the very brevity of the tale is also my further voucher for a

true chronicler. For it would be but a poor story-teller who could not hang upon such a skeleton of fact as I have here, fancy enough to please you all, were he so minded. That I have had the self-restraint to give you only this unvarnished record, not running hither and thither into devious by-ways as another might have done, should moreover commend me to your good graces. Thus much you will pardon me for having spoken in my own behalf. Now to my tale.

It was well into the last decade of the seventeenth century—the golden days for all such as would try the hazard of new enterprise and adventure by land and sea—that one Richard Whalen, a lad of good parts, and the eldest son of an English family of much repute, left his home suddenly because of some boyish trouble, or else that he was minded to see a wider world than was bounded by the shores of his narrow island, and shipped as a sailor upon a vessel that

was bound for a voyage to the New World—a land whose wonders were then ringing throughout the length and breadth of Europe.

It is possible that the purpose of the vessel upon which the youth shipped was only that of honest commerce. At least we will give him credit for thinking that, for certain it is that later he had need for all the lenient judgment which could be accorded him. But be that as it may, the ship pointed her bowsprit as straight as the course could be laid, for the West Indies: cruised for a little time about the Caribbean; touched at the rich ports that lay upon the east shoulder of South America, and there both master and crew let slip their holds on conscience as they made discovery of the more brilliant opportunities for lawless gain which offered there—opportunities beside which the dull round of honest trade seemed but a thing for fools to follow. Still, let us give them their due, for they were honest men once; and it has been

said, in extenuation of their espousal of that life, that the election was forced upon them of becoming pirates themselves, or prey for other pirates. And so, like wise men who knew that all gold were dross to them if they did not first save their own skins, they but chose the lesser evil of the two—as who would not?

Once in the swing of the new order of things, our young Richard Whalen developed so bold a front, such a wholesome zest for his work, such zeal to be at the fore in every enterprise that promised either danger or doubloons, that he speedily rose to be second in command of the dashing privateer into which the *Dancing Nancy* had been magically transformed, and thenceforth proceeded to make himself a name that soon was spoken with bated breath throughout all the cities of the Spanish Main—alike by armed and tinselled braggadocio señors, and by gentle black-eyed señoritas.

With all his lawless life, young Whalen retained a degree of British

thrift; and while his companions when in port quickly made ducks and drakes of the shining yellow pieces which they had wrested from their rightful owners without so much as "By your leave, sir—or madam," Whalen placed his gains in safe hiding, whence they might be gathered up when leisure offered.

Such evil gains grow fast, and the time was not long until he counted them greater than he could have hoped for by a whole lifetime of more honest employ. And had not the danger and the fascination of it held him, maybe he would have been minded to put this life behind him long before he did. As it was, he made an end of it after this manner: as gold was not the only gain of these wild rovers, it happened there one day fell to Whalen's share a captive; and in her, this wild runagate found the first living being who had ever fronted him with a courage equal to his own.

You know his life had not been one to teach him much of courtly graces.

So he came to her in his rough fashion and made as if to throw his arm about her, and willy-nilly take a kiss from the rich mouth. But, with a rapidity and sinuous ease that was the foil to his own uncouthness, she slipped from beneath the great paw that had barely touched her waist, and drew a silver dagger from her belt. Where this might have angered another, or spurred him on to further roughness, it only pleased our rover mightily.

"Tut! put away that little toy," he laughed; "you might harm yourself, or dull its tender point against my thick hide, my pretty."

"'Tis not meant for you, sir, but for myself, if needs be!" she made answer, meeting his eye bravely. "For myself—unless you will return me unharmed to my father. He will reward you with that which will make you a rich man, and give you no cause to longer lead this lawless life."

The liquid glances from her dark eyes, turned full upon him in spirited

appeal, somewhat changed his jesting mood.

"I have doubloons and pieces of eight now," he said, angrily, "until I am burthened with caring for them among my fellow thieves. For they but wait until my back is turned to gather them for their own spoil. And I fancy that had I much or little, there is not gold enough left upon the whole of this rich coast, to ransom you from me now. And as for the life"—he scowled darkly, though not at her—"'tis a good enough one."

But at his very word the pirate paused, as though struck with a deep thought. And in the instant turned and strode upon the deck, as if he held in his mind some deep purpose that would not brook delay. The master of the craft looked at him as he came up, with an evil leer making still more hideous his scarred and ugly face—a face in which uncounted crimes were mirrored. His lips parted in what was meant to be a smile, and his teeth showed like a hyena's as he asked:

"Well, mate, how like you your prize?"

Whalen made no answer for a moment, except that his scowl deepened and his own face darkened with sudden wrath as he looked upon the grinning manikin before him. He went closer to the captain and laid his great hand heavily on the other's shoulder.

"Look you!" he cried, in a voice that he meant not for the captain's ear alone, but that he purposed should be heard from cabin to forecastle. "Look you! I have tired of this. I have a mind now that I would like to see English shores once more. I want this ship."

"Is the man mad?" asked the captain, blankly, startled by his shipmate's manner more than by the mere words. And then, recovering himself speedily, he answered, with an assumption of bluff courage that he tried to make equal Whalen's own: "If you want the ship, my man, why don't you take her?"

"As you say, then."

And with the word the mate shot an English blow at the other that laid him flat upon the deck. Then, following his sudden advantage, with foot upon the captain's neck and pistol in hand to forefend any attack upon himself, Whalen began to roar orders as if there had never been any in command except himself.

"Bring irons, you fellow!" he cried to the bully who stood nearest him, and who had watched in mute amaze this rapid exchange of courtesies, and of commanders; ready, too, with a shift of the wind to give his allegiance to the one who held the upper hand. "Bring irons," repeated Whalen, "and put them on this man! Don't stand gaping, for I am master here, now! And, my mates," he continued, his manner growing softly truculent, "if there are any among you who would rather not take my orders, you had best jump over the rail—and so save me the trouble of shooting you."

His glance roamed about the group, resting an instant upon each one,

ready for whatever might come. But the men, hardened to such scenes of violence, to changes of authority made in the twinkling of an eye, and accustomed to the law of might; recognising the power of no arm but the strongest, and liking Whalen, too, rather better than the other, fell readily into line to do his bidding. So soon as they had the captain safely in irons, they stood by quietly for their orders from the new master. There were some scowling faces when they found they were to up sail and away for the white cliffs of Dover. And though they knew no prizes awaited them there, so much did they fear the swift retribution that Whalen would have visited upon any malcontent, that no demurring whisper was heard.

They delayed their swift course but once. That was to make fitting final end of their erstwhile master. When the first land was sighted, upon their new course—land which Whalen made out to be an uninhabited island lifting itself above the blue water—he ordered

the ship hove to and a boat lowered. Into this the captain was marched, at the pistol's point, and set upon the barren sand. And with that generosity that always played a fine second to his grim humour, Whalen sent with him a chest of gold—proof of the plethora of his own stores—in place of food or drink; into which the unhappy man might dip his blood-stained hands, and revel like a miser until death came to share the spoil with him.

So wrapt was Whalen in fond contemplation of the irony of this deed; so pleased was he with the mother-wit that prompted him to the doing of it; so did he gloat in thinking of the horror of those days and nights that the other would spend there with his gold, that it was not until the ship was well upon her course again that he chanced to remember a certain thing—which was no less than this: beneath the unsuggesting sands of that very island were cachéd some of his own ill-gotten gains, put there

against the coming of this very day when he should sail back to England to live again the life of an honest man. That this was the place, he now proved by tracings upon his rough maps. But he had enough and to spare, and maybe was not minded to front the skeleton that he knew would now be grinning there. Nor would he let his men know that he had paid so dearly for his little jest. So he only laughed and swore the more at the humour of it, and ordered that all sail be clapped on to bear them the more speedily away.

When he had seen that everything about the ship had been made tight and trim, and every stitch of canvas set to catch the last capful of wind that would help them forward upon their course, Whalen put himself manfully to the task of winning by fair means the heart of his lovely captive. And as he was no less ardent in wooing than in war, no less direct in courting than in fighting, the dainty citadel was not so long in capitulating as you

might have thought. The terms that he offered for its surrender were so fair that the lady sheathed her silver dagger, wondering a little how she could ever have thought it needed in a contest with one so brave and chivalrous as he. So great, indeed, was his success in this to him novel enterprise, that when at last English shores were made she hied herself willingly to a priest with him who was now doubly her captor, and they two were made one. And in the doing of it ended that which was of most interest in the career of this valiant courser of the seas.

With this Richard Whalen and his stolen Spanish bride we have now little further concern. You have seen what the man was—a roystering, boisterous, headlong fellow—not without his saving graces, but never turning back from that to which he had set his hand. And perhaps you will have learned from this, too, that in the mingling of the blood of the fearless Whalens with the hot blood of Spain,

there could come only a race of men who were of dauntless courage and untamed passion and strong purpose, whether it led them right or wrong.

A last word, and we have done with him. Legend says that these two lived happily—more or less—for many years, quietly in their English home. And so great was their wealth that it alone would have made them famous for all the country round ; but to this was added the strange tales of whence it had come, and how, so that the wonder grew with the telling and gave to Whalen a marvellous repute. As to their gold and treasure, it is but the fact that so little inroad were they able to make upon it that the son—the only child of this union, and father of the race of Whalens to be—was left almost richer than themselves had been.

Now this long tale I would not have troubled you with, but that it was necessary for the easing of my own task, and somewhat needful for a proper understanding of that which is yet to follow—as you may presently discover for yourselves.

CHAPTER II.

On a bright morning in mid-October two young men sat together at breakfast in a well-appointed club in the city of New York. Their surroundings clearly indicated them as men accustomed to the elegancies and refinements of life; in fact, betokened them members of that much envied circle who neither sew nor spin, yet need not take thought of the morrow. There was little similarity in their appearance, except that of dress and manner which is common to all men who are in the same walk of life. So marked indeed was the difference between them that it may have accounted in some measure for their friendship, on the well-known ground of the attraction of opposites; for one was tall and strongly made, and so fair that it

showed him a man of the North, while the other was slight and dark, and below rather than above the medium height.

The table at which they were seated was in a bowed window that gave out upon the avenue, just now brilliant and sparkling in the mellow sunshine and crisp with the air and movement of early autumn. The pavements were comfortably filled with well-dressed men and women; the latter seriously intent upon the rite of shopping, dear to all feminine hearts, and the former equally employed in watching the trim figures and pretty faces of the shoppers. Carriages drawn by well-groomed horses, the sparkling metal points of their harness catching and reflecting the brilliant sunshine, swung steadily up and down the broad street. The trees in the park just beyond were taking on the gorgeous colourings that prelude the dying year. Some of the paths were already covered with the fallen leaves, and sweepers were busied keeping them clean,

while loungers filled the benches and sentimentalised upon the season's changes.

The two men had been regarding it all with the nonchalance born of that long familiarity that sometimes breeds contempt. It was because of this that when the silence which had fallen between them was finally broken, it was by words which voiced this thought.

"Vanity Fair!" said the blond man, the older of the two; "a pleasant existence enough, as all these people seem to agree. But do you know, Carl, I am a little tired of it all? A change might be for the worse—but I fancy I should like to try a change of some sort."

"You are not the last man I should have expected to harbour that sentiment, Whalen," returned the other, "but you are certainly the last whom I expected would put it in words. Isn't it better to leave the thought voiceless and formless? I thought that you had long ago accepted the inevitable, had recognised the fact

that you are but a cog in the wheel called Society, and had given over the effort to be anything else. And I am not certain that any other game would be worth the candle. What would you have, if not this?"

"I don't know—I am not certain," said the first speaker, slowly. "I have been thinking, but I don't come to any end. I believe I shall unbosom myself to you, and let you help me to decide."

He impatiently pushed away the dishes that were near him, and of whose contents he had tasted but sparingly; then he lighted a cigar, which he watched with deep solicitude until he saw that it was burning evenly. There was an undercurrent of seriousness in his words and in his manner, in striking contrast to his habitual carelessness of demeanour, that caused Carl Mowbray to look at his friend questioningly. Neither of the men had been accustomed to regard life as much more than a holiday affair, outwardly at least, and it was in accord-

ance with this view that he made answer.

"If I help you to decide anything," he said, "it will be in favour of that trip I proposed. If you will only go with us, Dick, we will have no end of a good time. I have only asked the men whom you like best——"

"Thanks, but I can't do it, Carl," was the quiet answer, given with the air of a man who has made a firm resolve. "I should fancy it capitally. You know there is nothing I like better. And I know, too, that you will have a good party. But there will be no cruising for me this season—of that sort, at least."

"I suppose you have good reasons," said the younger man, complainingly; "but it won't be half a time without you. I have a mind to give it up, too, if you are certain you can't go."

"It is quite certain," said his companion; "but I shall be sorry to spoil your fun." And then he added, as if he had but just become conscious of all that his friend had said: "If you

would do that—if you could give it up—but I don't want you to go on a wild-goose chase, just because I am going to be fool enough to do it."

"Ah, now," said Mowbray, quickly, "if you have anything else on hand, anything worth while, that will take us away from this"—he gave a significant gesture toward the avenue—"out of this round? If you don't mind telling me, Dick?"

"Yes; I have wanted to. But I don't like to bother you with my personal affairs. Still, it is not a very long story—if you care to hear it."

His manner was even more grave than it had been, and he spoke hesitatingly, as if choosing his words, and considering how he had best begin.

"I beg your pardon, Dick. I did not mean to be inquisitive. Don't tell me, just because I asked—because you think you must satisfy my curiosity," interposed the younger man diffidently, colouring as though he had been detected intruding on the other's privacy.

Whalen touched his arm gently with the hand that held the cigar. An almost imperceptible movement, that in another man would have meant little or nothing. But with Whalen, it added emphasis to his words.

"I hardly think you need tell me that, Carl," he said, smiling, to further reassure his friend; "still it is a matter I would not speak of to any but you, that I would not be quite willing any other should have knowledge of."

He drew some papers from his pocket, motioning to the waiter, as he did so, to clear the table between them. Then he unfolded the documents, some of which Mowbray noticed were creased and yellowed with age, continuing to talk quietly the while.

"It is all about money," he said; "something that you and I have not found it necessary to discuss very often. I find myself wondering, now, how the poor devils feel who have to make this a matter for daily consideration? No, don't look at me in that

way," he laughed, seeing an expression of concern on Mowbray's face. "I have not been in Wall Street, and been shorn there like a lamb. Neither have I been plunging unusually hard at the races. My vices do not lie in that direction, as you know. I do not care enough for money to gamble for it. It is hardly so simple an affair as that which troubles me now, although I am afraid you may think I propose to do some pretty desperate gambling before we are through."

Talking was hard work, and he rested from it and poured out and drank a glass of water, and gave a moment of interested attention to the bright scene before their window. An observer would have said, from the leisure of his movements, that nothing very serious was the matter, after all. But Whalen could not remember that he had ever hurried in his whole life, and there was no need to begin doing it—just yet.

"If it is a question of money," said Mowbray, "why need you bother to

go into details? You know that mine is——"

"Yes, my dear boy, I know that," said Whalen, stopping him, and interpreting the unspoken words; "but wait until you have heard it all." He drummed nervously upon the table with his hand, and hesitated, as if half disliking the task he had set himself. "You know," he continued, finally, "that I came into my money at my majority. You know, too, that it was left for me by my uncle Dick, when he disappeared so mysteriously years upon years ago. I have told you that he was supposed to have been lost at sea. But I have since learned that his mysterious disappearance, his sudden dropping out of the world, was intentional, and not accidental; and that, though dead to the world which had known him, he was yet for a long time very much alive. However it was, and whatever his reason for his strange course, you do not need to be told that he left me enough to make a man rich, even beyond all the dreams of avarice.

He provided for me so liberally that I have never known a want, have never even had a wish unsatisfied, if money could provide the means for accomplishing my desires. But the money was not all that he left me. Besides that was a document, sealed, and only to be opened by myself when I had reached the age of thirty. This has always been a sort of nightmare to me, and I have wished and dreaded by turns to know its contents. As the paper has always been in my hands it has at times required all the self-control of which I was capable to prevent me from breaking the seal. But I kept myself from it, and preserved my self-respect. One week since—on the night when I was thirty years old—I read it for the first time. You may read it now, and it will tell you the rest of the story better than I can find words to do it."

His manner had become so grave and he had spoken so soberly, that Mowbray took the document which

his friend now handed him, almost with trepidation.

"Do you want me to know it, Dick?" he asked, before glancing at the written pages.

"Yes."

Then Mowbray read, not without some difficulty and occasional prompting from the other, for the ink had grown dim with the passing of the years since the lines were penned, this which follows:

"My Dear Nephew, Richard Whalen:

"When you read these lines I am now writing for your eye, it is my expectation that you will have reached the age at which, if ever, a man may wisely be left to choose his own course. I say this is my expectation. For while this paper will be in your hands long before you have reached the time that I have named for the reading of it, I do not believe a Whalen would be guilty of such a betrayal of trust and confidence as the opening of it before that time would prove. But if it be so that I am mistaken in this, then read no further, but cast this into the flames, for my further words will have no weight with you. But believing you to be a true Richard Whalen, I write on in confidence.

"If I am still in the world as you read, I shall be an old man. I have delayed forcing this knowledge and choice upon you, in order that you might choose with the mind of a man, and not with that of a boy. For almost ten years, when you have read this, you will have known the pleasure—and the pain—of having had at your command almost unlimited wealth. Whether it will have brought you more of pain or of pleasure—for it must bring somewhat of both—will have depended more upon yourself than upon it. Remember this! and if it has been most of pain, then be brave enough to place the blame where it belongs. If there has been more of pleasure—as I trust there has been—store the memory of it with miserly care, for you know not what the future may hold.

"*But do you know how these riches have come to you?*

"Listen. I will tell you. A long time ago an ancestor of yours, and of mine, suddenly disappeared, as I am about to do now. It must be that it is in our blood to do some strange deed, though I thank God that my purpose is not the same that his was. He went wholly from the knowledge of his people, for almost a score of years; and after that he came back, rich, browned by travel, scarred by battle. There were dark rumours of what his life had been, of how he had gained his wealth. But in time he died and was buried, and these tales died with him or were forgotten, and his wealth came to the next of

kin, and so for many generations we have revelled in it, unthinking and uncaring. But when it came to me in its turn, and in the course of years and by many hands, there came with it also the knowledge of how it had been won by him.

"My boy, it was the treasure of a pirate, a buccaneer, a man steeped in every crime, a robber, a despoiler of homes, one whose hands were red with blood. Its touch is poison, its possession a taint, its use a crime but little less than that which he himself committed in the getting of it. I have been a greedy man—as were all the rest—lusting after the things of this world; and so I have kept it, although I knew, and tried to reason myself into a calm enjoyment of that which it could bring. I have used it to purchase every pleasure. But there were the tears of women in every glass of wine that it bought, and the very coals that burned in my grate scorched before they warmed me, because they were the embers of burning homes. You may think this fanciful, and say it is but the raving of a man who has become crazed by overmuch dwelling on these things. But remember that it has been real enough to make me give up all the ease and luxury that I have known and loved through all my life, and to make me a wanderer in the world.

"Now I leave to you this inheritance, because it is not mine to do otherwise with, and I do not know that the curse of it will pass to you. Un-

til you read this you will know no taint in your gold. If it has brought to you, in all these years, neither trouble nor sorrow nor discontent, if it has made these years of your life years of unalloyed happiness, and if you do not fear the fate that has followed the Whalens who have revelled in this misgotten gold for almost two full centuries, then rest secure in the belief that through me the curse has passed from it. For I go now to do penance for the wrong that has been done by our blood.

"But—whether it prove so or not—when you read this you will be a man, and can choose your own course. Let not my words, but your own heart prompt you. Yet let me tell you that the worst that can befall me in my flight into this unknown future whither I now go, is better a thousand times than the torment I have endured. Make not a foolish choice. I trust that I am doing right in this, after having done so much wrong. I have given you ten years in which to taste the world, before putting to your lips this cup of the knowledge of good and of evil.

"Your affectionate uncle,

"RICHARD WHALEN."

CHAPTER III.

Carl Mowbray was a man of the world, and not a sentimentalist. Yet the direct and simple force of the letter touched him, and it was only by an effort that he lifted himself from the dark abyss of its dreary despair, into the bright and laughing world about him. It was a long cry from this morose, unhappy man, to the gay butterflies of the avenue without. The sunshine glinted there even more brightly than it had before, as it does to one who comes into it from a cellar. He felt cold, and shivered a little, and poured himself a glass of wine, for its warmth. He did not look at the other, at first, for he knew without the intervention of words, that this was a serious matter for his friend—one not to be lightly dismissed. He knew the set-

tled look, denoting resolute purpose, that he should see upon his face ; yet, after the manner of men of their class, he felt about for some trite and commonplace thing to say.

"Even if this is all true," he ventured, at last, "it is probably no worse than the beginnings of the fortunes with which other men are blessed—or cursed."

Whalen lifted his hand in quiet protest.

"Perhaps you are right. But that should not influence me. It appears from this," (he touched the paper as he spoke) "that it was clearly my uncle's intention that I should start life anew, after these ten years of a fool's paradise. The one loophole that he gives me—'If it has brought you neither trouble nor sorrow nor discontent, if it has made these years of your life years of unalloyed happiness, and if you do not fear the fate that has followed the Whalens who have revelled in this misgotten gold'—I am afraid has been closed. No man can honestly

say the possession of wealth has given him unalloyed happiness. I have not fared better than other men in that —nor in anything. So I have been trying, all these days and nights since I knew—it seems years instead of days! —to make myself believe that I have the courage to do this: to give it all up and make a fresh start. I think it is not that I am too much of a coward to give up the old life, but—I am fitted for nothing else."

He smiled, a little mournfully, it is true, toward his friend as he finished, and stretched himself lazily, and looked down with seeming contempt upon his magnificent physique, that he was compelled to acknowledge had fitted him for nothing but a life of dawdling ease.

Mowbray blew a wreath of smoke into the air from his cigar, and watched it with deep concern as it drifted away. When he spoke, it was as though the matter were of less importance than the smoke that had vanished. But men of their stamp affect to spend

serious words only upon affairs that do not touch their lives closely, and Carl was a little ashamed that he had let the words of the older Richard Whalen impress him so deeply. It was this that now led him to break as far away from the dark side of the picture as words could well carry him.

"No one need be a Spartan, my dear fellow," he said, "to give up this life that we are leading here. It palls on one, in the course of time. I could almost wish, for myself, that the old buccaneering days were not gone. I fancy that robustious ancestor of yours had more fun than has fallen to the lot of many of his descendants. A life such as the Free Companions led——"

"I am afraid you are going to prove a poor counsellor," interposed the other. "Here I am about discussing how I may rid myself of the gains of one pirate, and not starve myself in doing it, and you begin to hint of turning pirate yourself."

"I had not thought quite so far as

that," returned his companion, laughing; "but it might not be such a bad thing. Seriously, Dick, I am thoroughly tired of this sort of thing that we have here. If we only had lived in the old days, when men might start upon adventure, or set out upon some deed of derring-doe——"

"It is possible that those days have not quite vanished," said Whalen, speaking with a quiet intentness that made his companion start. "It is curious how our minds should just now be upon much the same thing. I do not care to turn pirate, for it seems there has already been one too many of such gentry in the family. Still, as regards this money, I do not mean that my conscience would keep me from the use and enjoyment of it, as in the past, merely because it has been a pirate's gains. All gold that men use has felt the touch of some Judas. Mine is neither better nor worse than that of others. I do not want you to think me better than I am. But my uncle had a right to impose conditions,

as it seems from this letter it was his intention to do; and I should obey them, even though they are implied and not commanded."

He paused, and smoked on silently for a time, his companion waiting patiently until he was ready to resume.

"There is one other thing in this," he said presently, touching the letter again. "My uncle says 'If I do not fear the fate that has followed the Whalens.' Perhaps you do not know" —he looked at Mowbray enquiringly —"that of each generation of Whalens, one has died a violent death while still a young man. In the last generation, it was my father. In this generation—there is none other but me. Now I think you know that I am not a coward. I am certain that I do not fear death. But to give up life for gold—that were a miser's part."

"You do not need to tell me you are not a coward," smiled Mowbray. "I have known you too long, I have seen you in too many places where courage was needed——"

Whalen stopped him with a motion of the hand, and harked back to the matter upon which they had been talking.

"This sort of thing," he said, indicating his meaning by other papers which he still held, "has always had a fascination for me. As my uncle says of his going away, the tendency toward it must be in our blood. A long time ago, when I was a boy, before I ever knew or thought of this, I used to read everything about them that I could get my hands on. Every story of the freebooters, every legend of buried treasure, held a peculiar interest for me, because I fancied I should some day set about discovering their haunts, and unearthing that which they had hidden. And it would be strange now," he continued, musingly, "if I should lose the fortune of one pirate, only to gain that of another."

He smiled at his companion again, as though asking indulgence for so whimsical a thought. But as he did so he unfolded other of the papers and

spread them upon the table for Mowbray's inspection. Some of them were old and worn, as was the first he had handed him, while one or two were fresh and clean, and written in Whalen's own bold hand. That to which he now called attention contained a number of newspaper clippings, pasted upon it in regular order, with marginal notes opposite each.

"To begin with," said Whalen, "this, as you see, is a clipping from the *Herald*. The date, you will observe, is nearly three years back. Read it."

He rested his arms on the table and watched the other's face narrowly while he read as follows :

"*Savannah, Ga.*, Nov. 10th, 18—. An expedition is now being quietly fitted out in this city for the purpose of proceeding to the Caribbean Sea, and there search for an island upon which treasure was supposed to have been buried by the pirate Lolonius, in the latter part of the seventeenth century. The island is described in the old records as *The Turtle's Back*, but as no island of that name is now known in the Caribbean, the question of locating the treas-

ure's hiding-place is one of the greatest uncertainty."

Although Mowbray read the item attentively, it was evident to Whalen that he did not attach much importance to it. This was made more certain by his words.

"Expeditions have been fitted out for like purpose," he said, "a hundred times. And they have searched all the land from the Isthmus to the Bay of Fundy. But the treasure has never been found. And this has made me a little sceptical as to any ever having been buried. That those old fellows stole lavishly, there is no doubt. But probably they spent with the same free hand, and so had little need of hiding any of their gold."

"Yes, I know," said Whalen, a little impatiently; "but I believe there was some foundation for all these stories. The trouble has been that most of the searchers had no clue, beyond an old wife's tale. I should attach no particular importance to this"—indicating

the paper Mowbray had just read—"but that once, when poring over an old black-letter, I came upon this." He took up another document and read from it:

"And then Lolonius, having more of plate and douploons in his ship than he dared longer trust to the knowledge of the other rovers of the sea who with him preyed along that Main, he did set sail for a land which was in shape like unto the *back of a tyrtle*, and did there bury thirty thousand douploons and pieces of eight, and so much plate that it lightened both his ship and his cares. And because Lolonius did there leave to the cruel fate of starvation (so that they might never disclose its hiding-place) the men who had holp him to bury the treasure, his crew did call the island henceforth by the name of *Captive*. And Lolonius, and all his wicked companions being soon thereafter killed in battle, as was their meet and just reward, the place where it was hid has not been found to this day. So that beneath the back of the tyrtle yet remains that which will tempt the cupidity of men for many days, so that they will fit out ships and search thereabouts for it."

"The old fellow who wrote that seems to have been a prophet, at

least, whether he was a true chronicler or not," said Mowbray.

Without answering this, Whalen took up the sheet of clippings again and read another item from the *Herald*, bearing a date some weeks later than the first:

"From wreckage which has recently come ashore below Cape Canaveral, on the coast of Florida, it is feared that the schooner *Pelican*, which it will be remembered was fitted out at Savannah to search for a treasure supposed to have been buried by pirates in the Caribbean Sea, went down in the storm of Tuesday night, with all on board. This closes another chapter in the tragic romance of the Buccaneers of the Spanish Main, for we think it will be a long day before other men will be so foolish as to take up the hazard of this search."

"Now," said Whalen, not giving his companion a chance to speak, "I have it in mind to hunt up this island. I had decided on it even before I had read this letter of my uncle. I wanted the excitement of it, and have been foolish enough to think I might succeed where others have failed. Now I have a further incentive to do it.

"HERE IS AN ISLAND THAT IS CALLED CAPTIVA."—*Page* 41.

I must have employment of some sort, and I see nothing of more promise than this, to which I can put my hand."

He spoke half seriously, half jestingly, now, but Mowbray could see that he was no less in earnest. He went on, unfolding a map of the West Indies and the Caribbean, upon which he had made pencil tracings and various memoranda.

"As you will see from this," he said, "here is an island that is called Captiva. There is a reason for each of these names, strange as some of them are, could we but trace it; and this is probably but the Spanish version of *Captive*, the name given to the one where the treasure was buried by Lolonius' men. Whether this is that island, we can only guess. But let us suppose it is true, then this is *The Turtle's Back*. This may be but a faint clue, but I feel that it is a reasonable one—where all is guesswork—as I admit. I feel that it will pay to follow this. If treasure is there it has now no owner, and might as well be

ours as another's. If it is not there, then the exhilaration of the quest will be something. I had meant to ask you to join me. If you are so minded, we will undertake this foolish business together. It is somewhat the sort of knight-errantry for which you were wishing. Wait," he added, as Mowbray began to answer; "I know what you will say. That if the gold of one pirate is cursed, this of another will be no better; so that I might as well hold fast to that which I have, as to give it up and take this instead. But the difference is here. One was had by sword and rapine—by my own blood—and it has come to me with conditions that I must observe. The other is a true treasure-trove, waiting for who will and who dares to come and take it."

"I am afraid that is arrant sophistry," laughed Mowbray; "but I am ready for the enterprise, none the less. I will go with you and see what the chase results in. But I am almost sorry, Dick, that we cannot go as true

buccaneers. I am fearful that we shall not get the sport from it that they did."

"I am Richard Whalen," answered the other, half mournfully. "I think it is written that the lives of the men of that name shall not be commonplace. You have enlisted for more serious work than you now think."

Light and thoughtless as Carl Mowbray seemed, even to those who knew him well; in spite of the fact that he was a man of the world and careless and nonchalant in his touch upon every phase of the life that he lived; yet had he many sterling qualities that endeared him to his friends, and a most sound aptitude for business, when it came in his way. Chimerical as he believed this errand to be, and engaging in it only for love of his friend, and that he had as willingly be upon that matter as upon any other, he now suggested to Whalen that it would be well to observe due caution in all their steps. If they proposed to find this island, with the definite pur-

pose of securing to themselves whatever of value might be discovered upon it, the part of wisdom would be to make certain their title to it at the outset. Otherwise they might have greater trouble in holding their treasure than in the mere finding of it. So Whalen, admitting the truth of what he said, but having no mind for such dry details, put these matters in the hands of his friend, with instructions to do whatever he thought best, while he himself matured the plans for their expedition. Together they studied the maps carefully, after which Mowbray at once set on foot an investigation, which disclosed the fact that the island of Captiva was one of a small and presumably worthless group which had come into possession of the United States by some former treaty with Spain, and which had then been promptly lost sight of by every one, but the records of which remained in the archives of the government. But even when they were unearthed at Washington, Captiva was valued so lightly

that it was willingly made over to the two friends by the commissioner in whose charge it was, upon the payment of a merely nominal sum. And the latter wished them joy of their purchase in a manner that clearly indicated his opinion that a fool and his money were soon parted, and that they would find little of either joy or profit from their new possession. But Mowbray was a man who knew how to keep his own counsel; and having no mind to be laughed at for a visionary, he invented the fiction that they proposed to engage there in the business of mining phosphates, rich deposits of which it was well known had recently been discovered upon some of the other islands of that sea. He even went to the length of having an elaborate report prepared by one Joyce, supposed to be a mining expert who had been sent by them for the purpose of making an investigation.

"Don't let them think we are such fools as to be bound upon a treasure

search," he said to Whalen. "If they think we have made a bad speculation in phosphate lands, all right. Other sane men have done the same. But I guess we are the first ones of that sort who have gone into this kind of thing. And I am not quite certain even of our sanity."

Whalen was too thoroughly in earnest to appreciate the other's jesting mood.

"Wait until we see what the end is, Carl, before you decide as to that. We may not get our treasure, but I feel that we shall not return quite empty-handed. It may be that there are more things than gold hidden there."

Mowbray looked at his friend keenly.

"I don't think I quite keep up with you, Dick. I hope you are not thinking of bringing away some dark-skinned daughter of the isles, for a prize, in case the treasure fails us?"

To this Whalen answered, laughing: "It might not be the worst place a man could go for a wife. But wait. We shall see what the end is, soon."

And as we, too, must wait a little upon the movements of these excellent companions, we will employ that enforced leisure by a glance at the strange land toward which they are about to journey, and the yet more strange people who have made it their home.

CHAPTER IV.

Binder, the Austrian who had lived upon Captiva Island for almost a dozen years, had never paid much attention to the inlet that crossed two-thirds of its upper portion, thus very nearly making two islands of that which nature had intended should be but one. True, he sometimes found it a convenient shelter to run under when the surf was high on the outer beach; but beyond this it had never interested him much. As it was, the island served his purpose; and it would have done so equally well had it been either larger or smaller, had the land been in two parts or a dozen parts instead of one, so long as he could have possession undisturbed. But different men see things with different eyes. When the Marquis Guil-

laume de Poincy came to Captiva he found this inlet the most attractive thing about it. Not at first, however, because he did not discover it at once, and Binder was not the man to point out things that another might find with his own eyes.

You must not reason from this that the marquis was dull, or slow of perception. It was only because he studied first the things nearest at hand, that he did not find the inlet sooner. The marquis was a scientist. As plant collector and roaming botanist for half the museums of Europe, he had drifted down into this remote sea in a little boat, in which, single-handed, he had explored almost every navigable water on the globe. Coming upon Captiva, and finding Binder encamped in a comfortable squatter's cabin, he had felicitated himself upon his good fortune and at once proceeded to make himself very much at home. And when, a week after his arrival, a great tide had come up in the night and carried away the boat

which he thought safely out of reach upon the shelving beach, and so cut off all present means of putting himself again in connection with the great world, he had accepted the situation with equanimity such as only a scientist and a philosopher could have compassed. So long as he saw work enough before him in his chosen field to occupy the present and the immediate future, he was content. Until he had exhausted the resources of this little island of the sea, he wanted nothing of the larger world.

At first Binder was shy and reserved with the volatile Frenchman, apparently inclined to look upon him with some suspicion, and not at all anxious to be favoured with the continuance of his society, so that he regarded the loss of the boat as more of a misfortune than did the owner of the craft. But the *bonhommie* of the Frenchman, his ready adaptability to all sorts and conditions of life, and perhaps the further fact that he seemed, like Binder himself, only a bit of the un-

classified drifting flotsam of humanity, finally reconciled the latter to his company. Indeed, in his quiet, undemonstrative way, Binder seemed to take some interest in him, and in his work. So for a time things went on smoothly enough. De Poincy worked steadily, and with all the enthusiasm of his nature ; studying the herbage of the island, collecting specimens of every plant and flower that its luxuriant vegetation afforded, searching diligently lest any unseen and hitherto unknown varieties should escape him. This through the day, from the rising of the sun to its setting. At night he still worked, classifying and arranging his collections with the minute dexterity of a woman, placing them between folds of heavy paper, and when his supply of this was exhausted using the dry palm-leaves instead. And when this was done he bound them all into compact volumes, making the covers of the palm-bark, and put them away for the time when he should return to the world and

present them to his beloved museums.

But at last the resources near at hand were exhausted and De Poincy was driven further afield in his search. And this brought him one day upon the inlet in the upper portion of the island, which so nearly cut the land in two that he indeed thought, at the first glance, that he had reached the limit of Binder's province and that the inviting green bank opposite was not to be arrived at dry shod. This, however, did not concern him so much as did certain other things that greeted his eye.

The *savant* looked about him with wonder and enthusiasm. Here were rich aquatic growths; the most brilliant flowers; vines twisting and drooping above the water from dense overhanging umbrage; air-plants growing in wanton profusion, their yellow and scarlet flame peering at him from the greener depths. All these told the scientist, more plainly than words could have done, that a richer soil was

beneath them than that which he had been exploring. Even while he gloated upon the beauty of these new-found treasures, his keen mind was seeking the cause which had produced this wonderful effect. He knew this was no chance growth. Nature did not work in such hap-hazard fashion. In ten minutes his trained perception had told him that which the duller faculties of the Austrian had overlooked for as many years. He had discovered that the vegetation upon the immediate bank of the inlet possessed wholly different characteristics from that which prevailed only a few paces away. Twenty feet from the bank were huge mastics, and gnarled and twisted gumbo-limbo trees that had the mark of centuries upon them, reaching their tall tops high up toward the blue sky; while closer to the edge the growth was but the child of a modern day, made up of cabbage-palms and water-oaks, interspersed with the tall and graceful bamboo, and here and there a wild orange

ladened with its golden, acrid fruit. The line between the two epochs of growth was too plainly marked to permit De Poincy to suspect for a moment that he saw here only some sportive freak of nature, some vagrant mood designed to puzzle science and to set at naught his learning. He began to look about for the cause, with the methodical directness of a man who was in the habit of going to the root of things. Still the rare botanical treasures that fronted him whichever way he turned, made him pause more than once in sheer amaze and contemplation at his own good fortune.

"*Mon Dieu!*" he exclaimed, with rapture; "this is to me a veritable treasure island. What a fool I have been not to look further about me than I could reach my hand, before this! But still, there is time enough. No one else will trespass upon me here. I shall find now both my reputation and my fortune. This will make the name of Guillaume de Poincy known at the Academy."

He fell eagerly to work, as soon as he could calm himself sufficiently to do so, and made a close and careful inspection of the whole ground. While he was engaged upon this task the Austrian came up and stood for a time contemplating him so silently that the other was not aware of his approach. When the Frenchman finally became cognizant of his presence, he greeted Binder excitedly.

"Ah!" he cried; "I have made a discovery! This is a wonderful place—your island!"

He held his hands high above his head, and waved them triumphantly at Binder. In one he grasped a giant fern, in the other the gorgeous bloom of an orchid. But his enthusiasm failed wholly to disturb the equanimity of the other.

"Some one has been here before us, Hans," he continued, bound upon interesting his companion. "We are not the first discoverers of Captiva—at least not of this part. There are signs——"

The Austrian's stolidity had forsaken him as if by magic. "What's that you say, sir?" he demanded. "Some one has been here, did you say?" He began to look about him, as if he would at once discover the intruders. "How do you know? When?"

He peered nervously into the undergrowth, as if half expecting some enemy to start forth; then at the soil beneath their feet, to see if there were other tracks than those made by the Frenchman and himself. But finding nothing at which to take alarm, he turned to the other again and began once more to question him.

De Poincy had been vastly surprised at the sudden change in the Austrian's demeanour, and wondered why he should be so much concerned at the possibility of some chance visitor having found their island. He could not understand why his companion should be so disturbed at so simple an announcement as this which he had made, and so gazed at him in amaze-

ment, answering leisurely, and playing with his impatience.

"By their tracks, Hans, by their tracks. Although time has done his best to cover them, they are still as plain as the nose on your face. I should say," glancing about with the air of a man who wished to make no hasty assertion, and who would be sure before committing himself upon a question of so great importance, "I should say," he repeated, slowly, "somewhat more than a century and a half ago. Perhaps," he added, as if thinking upon the matter deeply, and weighing it from every standpoint, "as much as two centuries since."

Binder growled surlily. "You gave me such a fright. I don't fancy such jokes," he said.

"Come," cried De Poincy, rallyingly, "you invited it. Why should you care who has been here, and when? You haven't any treasure hidden here, have you?"

The suddenness with which Binder started at this, made a strange

thought come into De Poincy's mind —a thought none other than that he had unwittingly come rather near the mark with his question; although nothing could be further from the opinion he had formed of the Austrian, than that he was leading this hermit life in a selfish search for some hidden riches. While the Frenchman knew there were many tales current of such things among these unfrequented islands, it had rather been his belief that in the Austrian he had at last found that which he had long hoped to find—a man who lived alone with nature for nature's sake, and because he loved nature more than men. And, thinking him that, he could have forgiven him almost any eccentricity. But he was afraid that he was to be disappointed in him now, and that he was to find him, after all, only like other men.

Binder hesitated a little before he answered, looking sharply at his companion, and seeming to ask himself if he could trust him with his secret.

So the two stood for a time peering at each other, questioning each other with their eyes, a suspicion of each growing in the heart of the other. With the Austrian, the dormant human element in the man seemed to be struggling to get the better of his habitual self, of the reserve which had been ingrained, doubtless, by his many years of lonely life.

At last he said, briefly: "Come, I will show you."

CHAPTER V.

As soon as Binder had spoken the word, his hesitancy seemed to vanish as if by magic. Without even waiting for the Frenchman's assent, he turned and led the way rapidly down to the water's edge, where he drew a small boat from its concealing canopy of green foliage, and entering it motioned silently to his companion to follow. Taking the oars, he rowed swiftly and still as silently down the inlet, beneath the branches of trees sweeping so low that they were forced to stoop to avoid being brushed from the boat by them, until he reached a point where a slight path was cut through the dense tangle of the woods.

From the moment when he had told De Poincy to follow, Binder's eyes had hardly left the face of the

Frenchman. Even when he led the way he had half turned and looked upon the other as they went forward. He seemed, with all the intentness of his being to search the very soul of De Poincy, as if to determine whether he might safely trust him with the secret which he was about to discover to him. Yet he pushed forward, as if anxious to reach the end of the mystery before his mind should change. The Frenchman grew conscious of the manner of his companion, and his mind reverted to the thought that had crossed it, and he asked himself again if he had some hidden treasure there. Apparently Binder divined the question, for he stopped and looked at the other sharply, and made as if about to speak. Yet he said nothing, but kept steadily to his oars—for they were in the boat by this—and when they had reached the path he turned the boat against the bank and stepped out from it, and again motioned his companion to follow.

Threading the path thus silently,

they soon came upon a scene that caused De Poincy to exclaim even more vehemently than had his discovery of the inlet.

Had he given his fancy the wildest play, it could not have conjured up such a spectacle as now greeted his startled vision. That which he saw first was a small clearing, in the centre of which stood a cabin, roughly but picturesquely built, sided and thatched with the coarse serrated leaves of the saw-palmetto, with which the island abounded. Before it stood two lofty cocoa-palms, like great sentinels, heavy clusters of the fruit hanging below their broad leafy crowns. At one side was a rose-garden, brilliant with tropic bloom and fragrant with odours, wherein the vines ran riotously ; upon the other, a grove of bananas, bending with the ripening yellow bunches, glowing like gold against the background made by the green leaves of the plants. Further away, groves of younger cocoa-palms, their smooth trunks standing like pil-

lars, supported an umbrageous roof through which the light could barely penetrate. Sheltered by these was a grove of orange-trees, the glaucous leaves shining in the sun, the luscious fruit hanging temptingly ripe and ready to the hand. Groups of a dozen other tropical growths betokened the hand of man in their care, rather than the erratic course of nature. These details De Poincy was able to take in almost at a glance, although his gaze was enchained the while by something vastly more startling—the figure of a young girl who was romping with a couple of huge dogs before the open door of the hut.

Almost before the men appeared in the opening the dogs gave voice and crouched as if ready to defend their mistress. But at sight of Binder they gave quick, short yelps of recognition, and went on with their play. The girl, having noticed only Binder at first, paused and was about to come forward. But upon seeing that he was not alone, she turned and was

entering the cabin when the Austrian called to her to come to them, and she at once obeyed. Binder watched her as she advanced, looking also intently at De Poincy, and did not speak again until she was close upon them. Then he said to her:

"This is a friend, Nonie. He has been staying with me. That is why I have not been here."

"I shall not like him, if he keeps you away," she answered, looking fearlessly into De Poincy's eyes. "I am tired of being alone, with only my dogs for company."

"Good heavens!" exclaimed the Frenchman, who had been too much amazed for speech until now; "do you stay in this place—alone?"

"Why should I not?" she asked in turn, an unfeigned surprise at his question showing itself in both her words and manner. "There is no one upon the island but Hans and me. And the island is all ours—Hans' and mine. Once it was all mine, but now I share it with him—he has been so good to me."

The girl drew herself up proudly, like a princess, as she claimed sovereignty over the land. Then she went closer to Binder and placed her hand confidingly in his, and standing thus gave De Poincy an opportunity to study her.

So olive-dark was her skin that he at first thought her a descendant of one of the native races who had made their homes among these islands before the encroachments of the Europeans had civilised them out of existence. But from the contour of her face and the high intelligence denoted by her clear eyes and broad brow, he quickly determined that she was of Caucasian blood. It was difficult to even guess her age, for while her form betokened the approach of womanhood, her frank and simple manner was that of a child. So marvelous a specimen of the human race, in so unexpected a place, the scientist had never before encountered ; and he was about to pour out a flood of questions, when Binder, becoming aware of his

purpose, interrupted him by again speaking to the girl.

"We may be about here often, now," he said, "and I came up to tell you, so that you would not wonder if you saw signs of our having been around the inlet."

"If you are here, will you not come to the cabin and see me?" she demanded.

"We shall be busy," answered the Austrian, evasively, but with his penetrating, questioning glance again fixed upon De Poincy. "I may not have time, for awhile."

"When does he go away?" she asked, nodding toward De Poincy, with marked emphasis.

"I do not know. Before very long, perhaps," said Hans.

"And then you will come again, every day?"

"Yes, as soon as I can," he answered, much after the manner of one who would comfort a child.

When they had turned to retrace their steps, De Poincy once more at-

tempted to question his guide, but the latter stopped him, saying:

"Wait until we are home to-night. Then I will tell you all."

Even with this assurance that he should so soon be given the key to the mystery of which he had been permitted a glimpse, De Poincy could but ill restrain his impatience. Perhaps he could not wholly have done so, were it not that the inflexible look of determination upon the face of the other—a look which told plainly that the man had come to some great resolve, and that not without a severe mental struggle—warned him that he must use the utmost caution if he would remain in the Austrian's good graces.

So great was his curiosity that now it would have been a serious blow had he been deprived of the hope of having it speedily gratified. This strange vision that had been so suddenly and so unexpectedly shown to him was most puzzling.. Rack his brain as he would, he could arrive at no reasonable

explanation. Who was this girl—this island sprite? What was she to Binder? He could not even hazard a guess. Her manner toward him was so confiding, as though he might have been an elder brother; while the Austrian's demeanour toward herself was one of affectionate respect, as though he had been specially appointed to guard and care for her. He had hardly the air of a servant, yet she had somewhat the imperiousness of one who knew herself to be mistress. As he thought of the contrast between them, he was sure they were held in this strange companionship by no bond of consanguinity. But beyond this negative conclusion he could not get.

While the girl and her surroundings remained the absorbing topic in his mind, his discovery of the inlet and the curious growths he had found upon its banks did not by any means pass wholly from it. That alone would have given him sufficient food for romantic speculation for one day. But

with the girl, the lonely cabin, the little tropic paradise in which it was set, the gardens and groves, her relations to the Austrian—these together were almost too much for the Frenchman to assimilate at once, and especially as he was compelled for the nonce to keep silence regarding them. It would have been some relief if he could have talked about it all—even if he could have poured out part of the great flood of questions that leaped to his lips. But a side-glance toward his companion, now and again, as he went stolidly upon the homeward course, told him plainly that to question now would be the surest way of not finding out that which he wished so much to know.

It was a hard test for the small stock of patience with which he was endowed. Binder was even more deliberate than usual that evening. He busied himself long with one thing and another, smoking away the while at the short black pipe that was his constant companion, and making no move

to fulfill his promise. He seemed to be pondering deeply, and De Poincy began to feel some awe of this simple, austere, self-contained man, who apparently had in his keeping some weighty secret.

It was not until the Austrian saw De Poincy finally bring out his collections and settle himself as if for the usual evening's work at their arrangement, that he at last broke the silence he had kept so long. Then he came and leaned against the table where De Poincy worked, and standing there smoked, and toyed aimlessly with the other's plants, and told this story in a dull monotone that was not once relieved by any suggestion of interest on his own part. But De Poincy worked, and listened, and lost consciousness of time and place as he became enwrapped in the tragic warp and woof of the story that Binder was telling so calmly.

CHAPTER VI.

"TWELVE years ago," said the Austrian, speaking slowly and with a precision that showed the effort it cost him, "I killed a man. It does not now matter why, but both my reason and my conscience justified me. Yet I was forced to become a fugitive from that which men have miscalled justice, or else wear my life out behind prison walls. If I had thought myself guilty of any crime against mankind, I would willingly have suffered such punishment as the law allotted. I tell you this only that you may know why I am buried here—why I have no longer any part in the world, or the world's work. In my attempts to escape I finally reached the coast, and there found that the officers were close behind me. Tired of being hunted on land, I deter-

mined to trust to the water. Having some money, I bought a small sloop —one that I could handle myself, as I was something of a sailor—and laid in stores to serve for as long a cruise as might become necessary.

"I laid my course due south, and for five days and nights sailed steadily upon it, never swerving except to make away from the land whenever it came in sight. A stiff breeze was driving behind me most of the time, and I made good headway. At first the lonesomeness of it was horrible. But after that wore away I ate and slept, and began to enjoy being alone with only the sea and the sky and the wind. The thought came to me that I would like to live so, alone, if I could find a place, and never be troubled by men any more.

"On the morning of the sixth day the wind, that had thus far seemed my friend, turned and began to drive me toward the east. Before night the breeze had changed into a gale, and it came on to rain, and the night set in

black and ugly. I could see nothing but the white foam dashing up, as I cut billow after billow with the prow of my boat. Often the waves broke above me with such force that I thought the boat would not outlast the shock. At times the lightning flashed, and I could then see a vast expanse of rolling, plunging waters, in which it seemed impossible my little craft could live. I could do nothing except to make everything tight and wait for day, or for what might come in the darkness. Long before the night was done I had given up all hope of ever seeing the day break again. The lightning ceased, and the darkness grew impenetrable. I was not only alone in the world, but there seemed no other thing in it.

"It must have been somewhat after midnight when I heard the roar of breakers above the storm—the dull, booming sound, repeated with horrible regularity, that no man can forget, having once heard it, for there is no other sound like it. It was so close and

so loud that it frightened me. Even if there had been time to prepare, I could have done nothing. As it was, the end came before I could think. I was hurled through the breakers and upon the shore—just off yonder."

Binder paused, and with a slow gesture motioned toward the beach in front of them. Seen through the open door of the cabin, it lay like a wide streak of glimmering silver, illumined by the starlight, against the dark blue mass of the sea. With that before him, De Poincy found it difficult to conjure up the picture the Austrian had drawn.

"Aye," said the latter, interpreting the thought of his companion; "it is gentle enough now, and makes pleasant enough music as it kisses against the sand. But you will see it when it is angry, and hurling wave after wave shoreward as if it would beat the earth back with them. It is then it will take you or me, sir, if we get within its reach, and flout us without mercy. It is like a woman."

There was no change in his voice as he said this, but it caused De Poincy to look up quickly and to study his companion's face for some sign of passion. But its phlegmatic immobility betrayed no token that he had ever been touched by woman's love—or hate.

Wholly disregarding his scrutiny, Binder continued in the same dull monotone:

"It was like that—that night. Angry and cruel. Wild and dark as it was, I knew at the instant what was coming. For the space of one single breath I heard the roar of the breakers, and could see the sharp white line they made along the shore. While I had no time for thought, instinct, perhaps, guided me; for I grasped the tiller with both hands, to keep her head straight for it, and then braced myself for the shock. It was not long in coming, for that was the last I knew. It must be that the first wave threw me upon the beach, and that the next carried the sloop off

again, and washed me further up the sands, beyond reach of the water. When I came to myself the sun was shining and the sea had grown calm again—and a little child was playing in the sand beside me. The child—was the one whom you have seen to-day."

At this, De Poincy was startled into a quick exclamation.

"This girl," he said, "here, alone, at that time?"

"No," answered Binder, "not alone. With her father she then lived in this cabin, they two the only living beings upon the island."

He paused again, and De Poincy again began to question, the progress of the narrative not keeping pace with his impatience. But the Austrian stopped him with a gesture.

"Wait," he said; "I will tell you."

He drew some quick whiffs upon his pipe, to make certain the coals were yet alive in it, and then resumed his story.

"How long they had been here," he said, "I shall show you presently.

They lived—as I live now. The old man—her father—for he seemed old to me, although his years were not many more than mine are now, made me welcome to what he had. That was little, as what I have here now is little. But that was, as this is, enough—and what more does man need? I told him my story, hiding nothing. And when I had done that, he told me I should remain and live with him. He said" —and at this Binder lowered his voice and spoke reverently—"that 'God had sent me.'"

"And the old man?" queried De Poincy, as Binder paused once more and began to smoke contemplatively, this time seemingly forgetting there was yet more to tell.

For answer his companion placed before him a small memorandum, worn with age. This had been carefully ruled and dated, as though it had been intended for the keeping of an elaborate record. But De Poincy saw at a single glance that few entries had been made in it.

The Frenchman had been profoundly impressed by the unvarnished recital of this dramatic tale, and now took up the book with the feeling that some great life's tragedy was about to be unfolded to him. So it was with a sensation akin to reluctance—curious as he was to know more of this strange story—that he opened the book and turned to the first of the entries, and read aloud as follows:

"'I, Richard Whalen, aweary of the world and carrying with me the heavy burden of another's guilt, do regard it as an act of Providence that I am cast here upon Captiva Island (well named, for willing or not we three are captives here). With these two whom I have found in this remote place will I live until death comes, striving by prayer and an austere life to make some amends for my past sins, and for the evil that was wrought by my roystering ancestor. So that, if it be God's will, the curse may depart from the gold which he won and which I have used, and which I have now left be-

hind me in this hope for my dear nephew, of my own name—the name that has been cursed by it for two hundred years. If my prayer is not granted in this it were better that I had cast it into the sea than to have left it to his undoing.' "

Following this were a number of blank pages, and these De Poincy turned impatiently before coming to a second entry. That, and the others which followed, were in the order in which they are given here ; but as most of the dates were omitted, and some of those which were given were evidently incorrect, as if there had been some confusion regarding the matter in the mind of the man who wrote, it will be impossible to give a perfect chronology. Time, doubtless, became of very little moment to these lives whose hours were ticked away only by the incessant beating of the waves of the sea upon their sandy shore.

"It is curious," ran this second entry, "what pranks chance doth work us. This old man who saved my life

(that is of so little worth to me) may be one who has suffered through the evil done by the first of the Richard Whalens. His story is this: That being much impoverished, tho' of an old and anciently rich family of Panama, and having among his papers some account of how the gold and jewels of his ancestors had been carried away by the buccaneers at the sacking of that city; and further, that some part of them were buried upon an island which was then called The Turtle's Back, he did set sail in a small boat, taking with him a handful of trusty men and his one child—a daughter whom he dared leave to the care of none else—to seek for the place where this treasure did lie. And that having reached this island of Captiva, which he did think from his charts to be The Turtle's Back, and having sought in vain a long time for the treasure, his men did finally become discontented and went away in the sloop which had brought them. But he refusing to abandon the search, with the child was

left here alone, to live or die, as might be the will of God.

"And now having heard this tale, I cannot but believe that the troubles of this venerable man, and of his sweet child, have been wrought through the direct agency of that thief, pirate, murderer, and son of the Devil, the first Richard Whalen. And for that cause, if for no other, will I remain and try to succour him in his old days, and so perhaps undo a little of the wrong that has been done by my name and blood."

Then followed numerous entries of slight importance, most of them describing the daily life of these castaways; recording the growth of the fruits and other little crops that they cultivated, and the satisfaction the writer found in so simple and innocent an existence. It appeared that after he had come they began a more systematic effort to cultivate the island, to grow the many luscious tropical fruits that the soil and climate made possible, and which already existed

there in a half-wild state, and to make their entire environment and the conditions of their lives not only endurable but enticing. De Poincy gathered that Whalen had been the prime mover in this, and from references here and there he believed that he had been actuated thereto mainly by a desire to please the daughter of the old man, and to provide her with all the comforts their little kingdom would permit. He passed rapidly over these entries, merely glancing at them to see that no item of importance escaped him. But presently he came to some which contained references to the treasure, which it appeared the old man yet hoped to find, and upon these he seized eagerly.

CHAPTER VII.

"THIS (the search for the treasure) doth still possess him like a haunting dream," wrote Whalen; "and I almost fear that the evil itching for it doth even begin to affect myself, steeled against all lust for gold as I had thought me to be. It would be but right—and a strange rendering of justice at the last—if I should be the instrument for the finding of it, and for restoring it to him. Yet is this island a large domain, and where hath he not already made search? I see the signs of his patient delving on every hand. And should it be found, what then? I am content to finish my life here. But even were any of us not so, where is the means for our departure? We have no boat that would live a day in the open sea, and no sail has shown

above our horizon in all the time that we have been here."

But is no man proof against an itching palm, or free from the curse of the love for gold? This is the question that De Poincy now asked himself, for later was this entry:

"He hath also papers which show how one called Lolonius did likewise make rendezvous upon The Turtle's Back. In such case, should we find the gold, there would be no curse upon it which I need fear more than another. For I am not of his blood; however, that of some other evil-doer doth run in my veins."

But this selfish and unworthy thought seems to have passed. For next he wrote:

"My friend is growing very old. His days are almost numbered. And before the tide has run in and out many times, he will lay him down here upon these sands and die. Then will his quest be over, and the treasure for which he has sought is not yet found. I will then be alone with Nonie. It

would be sacrilege that I, who have the blood of the first Richard Whalen, should mate with her, who I am very certain hath suffered through his misdeeds. Yet I am the only protector to whom she can look, and it may be that in this I can make amend for some of the evil that he wrought. She is very beautiful."

At these last words the Frenchman smiled wisely. But he said nothing to Binder of the thought that flashed across his mind, and went on with the journal. These were the entries that followed, in seemingly rapid succession:

"Yes, it shall be as her father wishes, before he dies. I think she has learned to care for me. Although we have no priest, her father shall say the words that bind us together, and I shall call all heaven to witness that I take her to be my wife—as truly and purely as though our vows were said at the altar."

Further on was this:

"It is over. He was happy, in

knowing that she was cared for. Now *may God so deal with me, as I with her!*"

After some time came this brief song of praise:

"Unto us a child is born. We shall call her Nonie. She is like her mother."

And then this threnody of despair:

"She is dead—my wife and my love! It is the judgment of God upon me, because I am of the blood of the first Richard Whalen, the Evil One, and have dared link myself with her. For my child, I will yet live on. But if death should come to me also—here? Will God then send a protector for her?"

And this was the next:

"God has sent him."

And then the record closed with these words:

"I, Richard Whalen, being about to die, do bequeath Captiva Island and the treasure which it may contain, in trust for my daughter, Nonie, together with the care of her, to Hans Binder—a man who, like those who have gone

before him on Captiva, has suffered from the misdeeds of others. *As he deals by her so may God deal with him.*"

When De Poincy had finished reading these entries he put the book down very gently, and the two men faced one another for a long time without speaking. The versatile and light-hearted Frenchman was awed by the majestic sadness of the words that had been written by that lonely and remorseful exile, and he appreciated the gravity of the trust that had been bequeathed to the Austrian.

He had no need to ask how this trust had been fulfilled. That the Austrian had given him this history, had opened these pages to him so freely, was in itself answer sufficient.

Binder had but a word to add, to make the narrative complete, and this he now gave.

"When I had buried him," he said, "I took Nonie up to the inlet and built the cabin there, and planted the groves that you have seen. And now

you will understand why I was alarmed at the thought that others had been there."

At this he made final pause. And to signify that his story was now finished he took the pipe from his mouth (where it had been held all this time clenched between his teeth) and knocked the dead ashes from it upon the ground.

The presentiment with which De Poincy had opened the book had been amply made good. He had indeed been brought face to face with one of life's tragedies. The Austrian, seeing him deep in thought, presently went out; and the Frenchman, left alone, sat for a long while gazing out upon the beautiful treacherous sea, watching the corruscating light as the waves broke quietly upon the sand, and peopling the beach again with the ghosts of Captiva's past—the two strange men and the lovely woman who had given up their lives upon it. From that his thoughts went again to the girl, living her strange and lonely life,

and he wondered if she must follow in the footsteps of the other to the very end. And he then thought of what he had seen that morning as he searched about the inlet; of the strange growths, and their tale of men who had delved there long before. And he determined that the story they had written there, he would read.

"It is her inheritance," he said, at last; "mayhap science can discover some things that have been hidden from those who only follow legend. Well, we shall see."

With that he turned to sleep, with the easy conscience of a man whose soul is set on good resolves. And when Binder returned to the hut, an hour later, he found the Frenchman slumbering peacefully upon his bed of palm-leaves, and the moon, shining down, shewed a happy smile upon his parted lips—which the simple Binder took as a good omen, and said to himself that Nonie had found another friend.

CHAPTER VIII.

A FEW days later than the time when Binder was telling his story to De Poincy, and the latter was reading the journal of the dead Richard Whalen and wondering what he might do for his living daughter, two young men were sitting in the office of the superintendent of the steamship company at Port Tampa, discussing with that official some maps spread out before them.

"Oh, yes, it will be easy enough to get to Captiva, if that is all," the superintendent was saying; "but you will pardon me, gentlemen, if I tell you honestly that I think you are on a wild-goose chase. The island is there, where you have indicated it on the map. But it is clearly enough outside the phosphate belt, as you may see by

these tracings"—he indicated a line upon the map as he spoke—"unless some of our able scientists who have been studying the question are sadly at fault. So if you have bought it for that purpose, I think you have simply been putting money in a hole."

He looked keenly at them as he spoke, as if half suspecting they had not confided to him their whole motive in seeking out the little-visited island. He was a man well in years, who had seen much of life on sea and shore, and who had known of many wild schemes cloaked under the guise of practical and legitimate enterprise. He liked the appearance of the men before him, and would have been glad to warn them from any rash venture. Yet it was not his place to interfere, more than he had already done by this word of caution.

"But we have the report of a specialist," began one of his visitors, who was none other than Mowbray, "and he gives us every assurance——"

"Probably after having examined it

from the same safe distance that we are doing now," interrupted the superintendent, smilingly. "Still, if you wish to go down——"

"That we certainly do," replied the one who had first spoken. "Do you not say so, Whalen?"

"I think so," was the quiet answer of his companion. "Now that we are started upon the thing we might as well see it through. If the superintendent will put us upon the track for reaching this *terra incognita*, we had best set forward as soon as we can."

"Very well then, gentlemen. I shall be glad to assist you all that is in my power, and I hope you will find matters there to your liking. You had better take our steamer down as far as the Cuban telegraph station, and I will wire orders ahead for a comfortable sailing vessel to be ready for you there on your arrival. Our boat does not go to Captiva, nor does any other vessel of any sort. There is no harbour at the island, and after you are once there you are not very likely to

be molested, as queer stories are afloat about the place, and sailors fight shy of it. And, by-the-way," he continued, as if the thought had suddenly come to him, "you may find some one on your purchase already, for I have heard there is an old squatter on the island, who is very jealous of his rights. I hope he will give you no trouble; but if he attempts to, by claiming possession, you had better buy him off. The courts are rather apt to uphold the claims of these settlers, even though they may have no legal nor technical rights to stand on."

"But does no one ever go there?" asked Mowbray; "no trading vessels, no fishermen? Surely this squatter must have some means of getting in touch with the world."

"No; it is off the beaten track, and the sailors are afraid of it. It is said that it was once the haunt of buccaneers and perhaps they think their ghosts still roam thereabouts. I have been told that this fellow who is there has no boat, nor any means of getting

away, even if he should wish to. But he seems content to live and die there, if he can only be let alone. Probably he is a little cracked."

At the mention of the word "buccaneers" the two friends had glanced quickly at each other, and this had not escaped the notice of the superintendent, who laughed, when they had gone, to think how easily they had fallen into his little trap.

As his visitors left the office, the official turned sharply toward a rough-looking, black-browed fellow who had been sitting near them during the conversation, but whose attitude betokened not the least interest in it. And in fact Manuel Garza, the well-known Cuban smuggler and revolutionist, had quite enough to think of just then in his own concerns. These employments to which he avowedly gave his energies were bad enough of themselves. But Manuel was more than suspected of other trades not even so harmless as these; of robbery and outlawry on sea and land, that if proven could well

have sent him to the gallows. But thus far he had eluded the direct proof of such crimes, although at times the toils were drawn uncomfortably close about him. Now he had been brought before the superintendent on an unusually serious complaint, and as he knew that officer was not a man to deal lightly with gentry of his stripe when they fell into his hands, he was endeavouring to prepare himself for the worst that could come from the interview.

"They tell me you have been up to all sorts of deviltry again," said the superintendent. "Smuggling arms into Matanzas, where you and your fellows hope to stir up another row, and bringing sponges into Key West without duty, is not the worst of it this time."

He eyed Garza as he spoke, but while the fellow shrank and cowered under his gaze he yet began to protest volubly. But the other stopped him before he had uttered a dozen words.

"Never mind now. It isn't worth lying about. You know I always deal frankly with you, and I will admit that I haven't any proof of this charge." Here the man looked up, with a glance of quick relief in his narrow cunning eyes; but they dropped as quickly when they met the other's, and when he caught the import of the words that followed.

"No, not a bit of proof," repeated the superintendent; "consequently I am compelled to let you go, without handing you over to the authorities for that punishment that we both know you deserve so well. But look well to this, my man. I had them bring you here that I might give you this warning. I have told my men not to bring you in again without proof. I have told them, instead, to hang you to the mast of your own schooner, the very next time they have reason to suspect you. This will save time and trouble all around. We intend to get rid of all scoundrels of your sort. You can go now."

The fellow began to whimper at this, for he knew the superintendent to be a man who did not waste words nor indulge in threats which he did not mean to carry out. But he was cut short and told again to go. So he slunk away like an evil beast, and like a beast cast back a malevolent glance at the man whom he dared not openly attack.

Two days after this episode, when the friends disembarked from their steamer at the dock of the Cuban telegraph station, they found the vessel waiting there which the superintendent had ordered for them. They were well pleased at its appearance, and at the manner in which the official had kept his promise. The vessel was a small trim schooner, having hardly more room than was required for comfort, as they found upon inspection; but with the appearance of being staunch and speedy—which were worthier considerations. The captain was a cheery, talkative little man, and had much to say to his passengers

about their proposed destination. They were not long in discovering that he was hardly more sanguine about the attractions of the island than the superintendent had been.

"I've been sailing and trading hereabouts a good many years," he said, "and this is the very first time as any one has wanted to go to Captiva, as I've heard.

"Yes," he continued, in answer to their questions, "it's a likely enough place, although I hain't never been just there, and so can't rightly say I speak from my own knowledge of it. It's kind o' lonesome like, layin' so out o' the track; and there's some hard stories told about what it used to be. Some pirates made it a kind of a hidin' place, once, and some says they have hanted it ever since. Howsomever, I don't believe that, myself. There ain't nobody there now but an old Dutch settler, an' he don't make up to no one. So traders has stopped goin' there."

"Ah!" said Mowbray, "so there is

an inhabitant. That seems encouraging. A nice sociable companion he will be apt to prove, from what the captain says."

His remark was addressed to Whalen, but the latter only nodded and bent forward again to listen to the captain.

"Yes," went on that worthy, reminiscently; "Captiva's been settled, after a fashion, for a good many years. Th' was an old man with his daughter there once. Spaniard, I guess. That was a considerable time ago. Then some other furriner jined 'em, gettin' there *I* don't know how, I'm sure. Then the old man died. Then this Dutchman came, an' I guess he just dropped down from the skies, or up from the other place, for there wern't no boat landed him. That's one of the things that's curus, 'bout Captiva. The way folks gets there. You gents is about the first that ever wanted to go in a reg'lar way, like flesh and blood men."

Thus he rattled on garrulously, with

his own version of the story Binder had told to De Poincy, and that the friends were to listen to once again upon the very place that had been the home of all this tragedy. Only once did either interrupt the smooth flow of his words by a question.

"But tell us, Captain," was Mowbray's single query, "how you know all this, if no one ever goes to the island?"

The sailor lowered his voice, and looked about them mysteriously before he replied.

"Manuel Garza," he said, impressively. And then, seeing that the name conveyed no meaning to them, he added by way of explanation: "A Spanish smuggler. Some say a pirate —and worse. He knows everything that happens in this whole sea. I think he is in league with the devil, he finds out things so."

It was so evident that the thought of this Garza was terror-inspiring, that Mowbray turned his face away to conceal the smile that came unbidden at

the captain's sombre words. He knew enough of the singular credence that sea-faring folk give to the most impossible tales, that he did not for a moment think of arguing against the captain's superstition. This, perhaps, gave the other a ground for believing that his hearers were as much awed at this as himself.

A four days' run, with favouring winds, should have brought them to Captiva. But late in the afternoon of the third day, and just as they were congratulating themselves upon having made so favourable a voyage, and thinking that now they would soon be at their destination, a slight rain began to fall. The sky, which had been an unclouded expanse of the clearest blue, had been transformed into a dull grey so imperceptibly that the change had almost wholly escaped their notice. A heavy fog followed close upon the heels of the rain, and closed in about the vessel like a white wall.

"A Scotch mist," said the captain, trying to dispel the gloom that had

settled over them all, by affecting to regard it facetiously. "It's the kind they make clothes of, over there."

But in spite of the lightness of his words the young men could see a glum look upon his weather-beaten face that belied them wholly. The wind had died out, and the boat made but little headway, drifting along at a pace that barely disturbed the calm and smooth and tranquil waves that washed with a gentle idle swish against her prow. Through all the long night they lay thus, the sea, the sky and the boat enwrapped in a white and impenetrable blanket, as much alone as if the world was not, and they only floating in void space. It was like a phantom world, and they, in it alone, voyaging toward the unknown. The men were oppressed by the calm, by the unearthliness of it, and talked in muffled voices. The lank sails, as they hung and flapped against the mast, having no breeze to fill them, were the nearest to tangible evidence of life of anything about, so perfect

was the silence upon the sea and in the air above them. It was weird and ghostly, this soft white fleece that wound itself about them on either hand. It weighed upon and oppressed them. Even Mowbray's light heart failed him, and he wished most earnestly that they might have done with it, and be upon their way and errand once more. Whalen took refuge in a glum silence that his friend did not care to break, lest in so doing he should arouse him to words which would make their situation still more unbearable; for he had found in his companion's nature a deep line of fatality that at times made him heavy and dark-spirited, and Mowbray did not care to provoke his black demons while he was having hard enough work to keep himself away from their clutches.

The night passed and the day broke again, almost unnoticed, as not a ray of sunlight penetrated the intolerable mist. As the second day of the calm and the ghostly silence wore on to-

wards its close, the captain's face became even more glum and anxious than it had been. He walked restlessly up and down the deck, and seemed desirous for human companionship.

"We have plenty of sea room, have we not?" asked Mowbray, pacing the deck with him, for the want of something better to do, and wishing impatiently that a wind would come up to drive away the mist and the calm.

"Plenty, plenty," was the ready answer, given with an attempt at cheerfulness; "but I *don't* like running in a fog. It's worse than any storm, for that a man can fight against. But no seamanship can serve in a fog. There was Captain Manson, as capable a man in the handling of a ship as there was on the sea. He'd gone into Havana Bay a hundred times, and knew the road as well as he did to his own locker. Well, he was going in one day last spring, as usual. Morning a little muggy, but he picked up the whistling buoy all right enough

and then made Morro Castle about three miles off on his starboard bows. Plain sailing enough after that, but hang me if he didn't lay her on the rocks an hour afterward, half a mile to t' other side the Castle. No sir," he concluded, with emphasis ; " I don't like running in a fog ! "

His auditor, tiring of the monologue, went to the side of the vessel and stood there ; at first chafing impatiently at their ill fortune and wishing he possessed the power to whistle up the wind, as he had heard of sailors doing, and to whistle away the mist at the same time. But finding this thought profitless, he finally let his fancy wander where it would ; and so it ran ahead until he had conjured up a wonderful vision of the sea-girt island whither they were bound, and of the stores of treasure that but awaited their coming to leap from the dark recesses where they had so long been hidden.

He may have been standing thus for an hour, indulging himself in such

dreams, when he was startled by a sudden cry from the lookout; and before the sound of it had wholly died away, the schooner, which had been drifting along so slowly that its motion could hardly be felt or seen, came to a full stop. There was no shock, because she had struck neither upon a rock, nor on the sands of some fog-veiled shore, but had simply driven her nose very gently into a high wall of yielding earth, which was so overhung with a dense mass of vines and tropic foliage that the latter draped the prow of the vessel and drooped down upon the deck. All of this was not discovered or fully realised upon the instant that the schooner's course was stayed. But when the captain at last was fully cognizant of the situation he was so astonished that for the instant he quite lost the power of speech. He rushed to the bows and seized a handful of the green foliage, to prove if it was real and no phantom. And when the whole truth was made clear to him the vivid terseness of his

language was such that it seemed almost to cieave the fog and permit a glimpse of their surroundings.

"I think we have landed in the Garden of Eden," said Mowbray, serenely, reaching over the rail to pluck some blossoms from the hanging vines.

"Landed in the middle of H—!" cried the captain, wrathfully. "Do you see that, sir?" He waved his hand tragically back to where the open sea had been, but where the land now appeared to encompass them as closely as in front.

"Perhaps this is Captiva," suggested Whalen, quietly. But the suggestion only increased the other's ire.

"Captiva!" He fairly roared the word. "Captiva is leagues away at the best. But I wish we knew where we are."

"By-the-by, Captain," laughed Mowbray, his good humour wholly restored by even this tentative sight of land, even though it was as yet unknown soil, "do you remember the story you were telling me a little while

ago? This seems to prove its application."

"Oh, you may laugh," growled the worthy skipper, not in the least inclined to do so himself, and so the more irate at seeing that disposition in another; "you may laugh, but I have to get this boat out of this infernal hole, whatever it may be."

"Better wait for morning, and have daylight for finding where we are. It is nearly night now," said Whalen.

CHAPTER IX.

But when, acting on Whalen's proposal, they had settled down into the dull inactivity of waiting, and in guessing what the coming day would reveal, he was the first to begin chafing at the restraint.

"I don't fancy these delays," he said to Carl; "I am anxious to be at our island. I have a feeling that something beyond the ordinary is waiting for us there. I should like to prove whether I am a true prophet."

"Better be content with the goods the gods provide," jested his companion. "This is sufficiently out of the ordinary for me, for the present. If there is anything more strange to come, you must give me a chance to get nerved up to it by degrees."

The night was not one to persuade

them to late hours, and soon all went to their berths, leaving a solitary watchman upon deck.

When they came out of the cabin at daybreak the fog had cleared and so they were enabled to obtain some idea of their immediate surroundings. The schooner floated in a narrow channel, in which there was apparently a good depth of water. The banks were some feet higher than the level of the tide, and it was into one of these walls of earth that the prow of the boat had thrust itself. They had drifted in for some little distance before thus being estopped from further progress, as they could determine from the sea being hidden from sight by a bend in the channel behind them. The heavy growth of vine-encumbered trees prevented them from seeing far inland, so that as long as they took their point of view from the schooner's deck they were nearly in as bad a plight as while in the midst of the fog. Nevertheless, the captain seemed to be able to divine something of their situation.

"We've drifted plum into the mouth of a bayou, that we can't drift out of quite so easy. That's plain enough," he said, disgustedly. "It's too narrow to turn round in, and the channel's too narrow to sail out of, anyhow. So, as we're here, I guess we'll have to stay awhile."

"Well, it seems a good enough place to stay," said Mowbray. "Let us get ashore, Dick, and see what there is. Perhaps we have discovered a new world."

They swung themselves easily to land from the bowsprit of their stranded vessel, and went out along the bank of the bayou until they had passed the bend that hid the schooner from the open sea. Then they were in full view of the boundless expanse of blue water through which they had come to this curious port. Looking back, they could see that the bayou in which they had made such unlooked-for harbor was one whose course was full of tortuous windings.

"It seems a good hiding-place,"

said Carl. "If the captain cannot get the boat out we may lay here for many a day before we are sighted." Then, looking along the shore below where they could see the white surf breaking upon the sands, he added: "It was nothing short of a miracle that we chanced to drift in here, instead of going ashore down yonder. And an equal miracle that we have drifted in so far. I should have thought we would have stuck at the first turn."

"I am inclined to think it was more than chance that sent us here," returned Whalen. "But we came ashore to see what we could find. Let us look about."

"Oh, I don't fancy we shall find our fortune in this spot," said Mowbray, kicking a little contemptuously at the sand as he spoke. "This," he continued, "is not of the sort that carries gold—nor pearls nor precious stones. I do not think we shall find even phosphates here—even if we were searching for them, which I am happy to say we are not."

He laughed a little at the recollection of the superintendent's well-meant intimation that they were likely to find themselves outside of the phosphate belt.

They presently retraced their steps, passing the schooner and going back along the bayou to where it hid itself further in the land. The wild beauty of the forest now attracted them, and they paused at every step to examine and exclaim upon it.

"It is vastly better than the deck of a schooner in a fog," said Whalen, "but it is certainly curious that our old duffer of a captain should not be able to locate himself. And after boasting, too, that he knew these waters so well."

"Oh, he will say this isn't down on the charts, or be ready with some other excuse. Look out," he added suddenly, hearing a low growl from the underbrush, "we may find something we do not like."

Both men instinctively sprang aside, away from the point from which the

noise proceeded, placing their hands at the same moment upon their pistols. But before they could draw and fire a huge tawny-skinned beast had flung itself over the intervening growth of cactus and Spanish bayonet, and fastened itself upon Whalen.

Richard Whalen was as well fitted by nature as any man could be for the strange contest thus unexpectedly forced upon him. Of almost heroic mold, with muscles of steel and nerves that nothing could daunt, without superfluous flesh to encumber him, supple, quick of eye and hand, and of a physical courage surpassed by no man, he was an antagonist of whom any foe, brute or human, would need beware. But in the instant when this strange, silent enemy leaped upon him, he felt that he would have call for all his powers. Throwing his arms out, he caught the beast in its leap, fastening his fingers about its throat, and thus preventing it from thrusting its fangs into him. The suddenness of the shock was such that it bore him to

the ground, and there brute and human rolled about among the tangle of creeping vines and rough saw-palmetto, Whalen the while desperately endeavouring to sink his strong fingers deeper into the animal's throat, and so choke it into submission, and the brute threshing and clawing at him with tiger-like ferocity. Both fought in a grim silence that made the combat all the more terrible. Mowbray, revolver in hand, endeavoured to assist his friend, but dared not fire for fear of wounding him, so rapid were the gyrations of the combatants. Finally, the struggle having become comparatively quiet for a moment, he saw his opportunity and was about to fire when his pistol was suddenly struck from his hand. At the same time a voice cried sharply:

"What! kill my dog, would you? Lion, come here, sir!"

At the word the brute released himself from Whalen's hold and sprang up, revealing a splendid mastiff, whose tawny skin and the savageness of

whose attack had made him easily mistaken for a wild denizen of the forest, in the excitement of the moment and the semi-darkness underneath the heavy tropic growths.

Whalen, as soon as he was on his feet again, began to fleck the stains of the combat carefully from his clothing, and to part his blond beard nonchalantly, meanwhile regarding the new-comer quizzically.

Surprises were in store for him that morning. He now beheld a young woman of comely form and feature, dressed somewhat fantastically in a costume composed mainly of skins of animals and feathers of gorgeous tropical birds. About her shoulders she wore a flowing feather mantle of marvellously fine workmanship and of the most artistic blending of colours. The slightly barbaric effect of her dress was heightened by her own brilliant hue, by her glowing eyes, and by the masses of black hair that fell unloosened to her waist. This beautiful apparition looked angrily

"'I AM NOT A PRINCESS,' SAID THE GIRL. 'I AM NONIE.'"—*Page* 117.

from one to the other of the companions, and imperiously repeated her question :

"What! kill my dog, would you?"

As she turned from one to the other, awaiting their answer, Mowbray began to speak, rather shame-facedly.

"But your dog would have killed my friend," he said.

At this the girl lifted her head with a fine motion of disdain, and looked at Whalen more closely.

"Kill him?" she said. "I think he looks as if he might take care of himself."

Whalen bowed gallantly. "Thanks, Princess," he said; "but your dog took an unfair advantage of me. He did not announce his intention to do mortal combat."

"I am not a princess," said the girl, seriously. "I am Nonie. Lion is not used to strangers."

At the mention of his name the dog, who had placed himself beside his mistress, began to growl and show his teeth again.

"No; so it would appear from his conduct," assented Whalen; "and I should imagine that you are somewhat out of the highway of travel here, so that he has little chance to become used to them. But may I ask if he has any other acquaintances besides yourself?"

"Yes, he knows Hans. That is all."

"And who is Hans? Your brother?"

"No, it is Hans Binder, who owns the island with me."

Then she looked at the strangers curiously, as though she were about to take the questioning into her own hands. But before she could begin to do so, the noise of approaching footsteps was heard, and Binder himself appeared, accompanied by De Poincy.

The Austrian seemed anything but pleased at sight of the new-comers, and stood silently regarding them with a lowering face. De Poincy, however, hailed them most heartily, and introduced himself at once. The young men explained in turn that they

were unwilling intruders, and would trespass no longer than the time required by their captain to devise some means for extricating his vessel from its present extraordinary and unpleasant position. The Frenchman laughed, and thereby made himself Mowbray's friend, as Carl told, not without some humour, how they had drifted into the bayou in the fog, imagining themselves well out to sea until they had found their boat securely anchored there.

"It will not be such an easy matter to get out, I fancy," said De Poincy; "and it has always seemed difficult for any who come here to get away again." Then he recounted how he had lost his own boat, and so had been forced to remain and partake of Binder's hospitality. "But I am in no hurry," he said; "I am quite content to remain. I find so much to interest me."

Whalen asked some question about the bayou in which their boat was imprisoned, and the Frenchman answered,

"This is not, as you may have imag-

ined, a natural bayou, but it is wholly an artificial work. But it is so long since it was cut that both the channel and the banks have become partially filled up, and so pretty nearly destroyed the evidences of man's handiwork. Still, the evidences are unmistakable, if you will look closely."

"This an artificial canal!" exclaimed Mowbray, looking about him in astonishment, and half incredulously. "But by whom was it made? And when? And for what purpose?"

"Buccaneers," answered De Poincy, sententiously: "but for what purpose —" He concluded with an expressive shrug in the place of words.

"Come with me; I will show you," he added, a moment later. And with the word he led the party further down the inlet.

"See here," he exclaimed, presently, stopping and pointing to a certain portion of the banks; "this has been no light task, I can assure you; but it has proved the truth that my first surmise was correct, the very idea

that came to me the moment I first set foot where we now stand. I have dug away the *débris* that nature has been piling here for a hundred years and more, and have uncovered the original walls of the canal. A good piece of engineering those old fellows did!" he concluded, admiringly.

It was indeed no small task which De Poincy, with the somewhat grudging assistance of Binder, had accomplished in exposing a clear cross section of the walls of the bayou—or canal, as it now more properly seemed—freeing them not only from the accumulated *débris*, but cutting away as well all the newer growth that had sprung up there since the soil had been disturbed. In doing this he had come upon the explanation of the greater richness of this soil, and of the more luxuriant vegetation that it had produced. The canal had been cut through a strata of decaying bone, a substance most rich in the elements that contribute to all plant growth, and this had furnished the food for

the varied trees and shrubs and plants that had been the means of first attracting his attention.

The banks, as they now appeared, truly deserved to be called walls, as the Frenchman had named them; for they had been cut with the utmost precision and exposed a clean, pearly-grey surface that was in sharp contrast to the darker earth with which they had been covered. From the point of view of the scientist, or the discoverer, or perhaps we might even say the antiquarian, (although this work was hardly of a sufficiently remote period for that), De Poincy was very well repaid for his labour. But while from these standpoints he had keenly appreciated the results of his work, it was none of these that had been the chief factor in urging him to it, but rather the story that Binder had told him that night in the cabin. For he had then resolved that he would do his best to prove the worth of Nonie's inheritance, and try if he could not open the way to a better future

than this which had been in prospect for her. However enticing a life on such a little seagirt island might appear to the idealist, it had not much to recommend it in reality to the active and worldly-wise Frenchman.

While De Poincy had been enthusiastically explaining the canal, and his work upon it, Mowbray had been idly poking about in the pearly-grey dirt beside it.

"Oh, I say," he exclaimed suddenly, calling Whalen's attention; and then, checking himself as he saw the others also looking toward him, he continued: "Pshaw! it is nothing but a piece of old bone. Belonged to some monster of the Upper Tertiary, I presume, and has been lying here for thousands of years."

"You are not so very far wrong," said the Frenchman, indifferently; "only a geologist might put it in another way, and have said that this was a portion of the highest land at the time of the Flood, and that it was in consequence the last to be submerged.

And that all the animals, except such as went into the Ark, came to these portions as a last refuge, and of course were finally overtaken and died here. It is their bones, the bones of millions and millions of animals, that died millions and millions of years ago, that have made this grey formation, and it is this, in turn, which has made the soil so rich and the herbage so luxuriant. You will see that it is more so here than elsewhere about us."

A glance of quick intelligence flashed between the two friends, a glance in which was mingled surprise at the discovery they had so soon made, and of amused wonder at the quips of chance, that had kept up for them such an unremitting series of surprises. For here, where they had drifted by the merest accident, they had come upon that for which they were ostensibly in pursuit, but which in reality had been the very furthest from their thoughts. This, at least, it was clear to them now, was not outside the phosphate belt, of which the superintendent at

Port Tampa had spoken, even if their own Captiva was.

Through Mowbray's quick brain ideas were running like wildfire, and he wanted to get away from the others that he might think them out in peace. He had the commercial instinct, although his life had been such that he had never needed to employ it. But now a fancy seized him and held him.

"Come," he said to Whalen, after a little, "let us get back to the schooner and see what plans the captain has made for getting off."

CHAPTER X.

THE skipper had by this time somewhat recovered from the wrath that had possessed him at finding himself and his vessel in so strange an anchorage, and having decided that the boat could not be extricated without some additional aid, and having no notion where such was to come from, had set himself to patiently await what events might bring forth. Finding that the fishing was good in the inlet, he and his men had put their lines out and were enjoying themselves at the sport as if they had no more serious duty in life. One of the men had also made discovery of an oyster bed, and with a small hand net had succeeded in gathering a bucketful of the bivalves, which he had just brought on deck. The captain was regarding these

closely as his two passengers came up.

"These look to me," he said, with an air of profound conviction, "uncommonly like the pearl oysters we used to get off Trinidad, sometimes. I always thought I would like to go down there and make a business of pearl fishing. Maybe this is my chance, now, without goin' so fur from home. Suppose we open some of these fellows and see what they have inside their hulls."

With that he whipped out his knife and rapidly split open a dozen or more of them, throwing each down with an exclamation of disgust at finding nothing to reward his pains. But presently this tone gave place to a note of the most intense satisfaction, for he had finally discovered a tiny pearl snugly ensconced in the matrix just within the lip of the last oyster that he had opened. Upon taking it out they found that though small the pearl was a very perfect sphere, and probably of some value. As both Whalen and

Carl joined in this opinion, the old fellow's delight knew almost no bounds. He danced about the deck like a boy, holding his treasure high above his head, and exclaiming upon his good fortune.

"Ah, ha," he cried, "this just suits me! It is just as well as if we had found your island. I think I'll stay hove to, and fish for pearls awhile. Maybe that fog wasn't so bad a thing, after all. I s'pose you've no objection?" he added, as an afterthought.

They certainly had no objection to his disposing of his time as he might choose, so long as it was a self-evident fact that he could not get the boat to sea again, and so he complacently went on with his occupation. But presently he took a second thought, and said, as if to convey a hint that he should not expect his passengers to take any part in this, nor in the possible profits of his venture:

"I suppose you gents can find something to amuse yourselves with, while we're layin' here?"

"Oh, yes. Don't bother yourself about us," answered Mowbray. "Stay here as long as you like, and fish for pearls. We are all over our hurry now."

Then they left the captain alone with his lines and nets, and went below to talk over their own affairs.

"It appears," said Whalen, as soon as they found themselves alone, "as if we have really strayed upon the fabled 'Treasure Island.' Phosphates and pearls make a rare combination. Curious that we should have happened upon phosphate deposits, which we were but nominally in search of! It is quite possible that this may prove of as much value as if we had reached Captiva."

"And there is another element of attractiveness here that you have not named," laughed Mowbray. "Do you so soon forget the dusky beauty who cares more for her dog than for our precious lives?"

"She must be considered," returned the other thoughtfully, taking no notice of his friend's jesting mood. "We

must find out if she and the taciturn Austrian are really the owners. It is very evident that neither of them, nor the wise Frenchman, even, has any idea of the available wealth that is right before their eyes. I wonder how they happen to be here. We must find out what rights they have, and deal fairly with them. Still, it should profit us well, in any event, as we are the discoverers. We can doubtless make a satisfactory arrangement with them to open and work these beds, if they are the owners. The phosphate is wonderfully rich, and if the beds prove to be of any extent they will prove a fortune in themselves. They almost drive the object of our expedition out of my mind. It may not be quite so romantic as finding treasure of another sort, but it will lead to the same end. And what I wanted, after all, was money to which I could feel I had a right, and in regard to the disposal of which no one else could dictate. This would be a legitimate enterprise, of which we would have no cause to be ashamed."

"You are getting mercenary, Dick," said his friend; "but I enlisted for whatever might come up, and so I am with you in this, although I confess it does not suit me quite as well as a little mild buccaneering would. But let us begin by finding out where we are. Doubtless one of the three inhabitants is geographer enough to inform us. Why did we not ask?"

At this question Whalen broke into a hearty laugh, a thing most unusual with him.

"We are not very bright," he said; "that would seem to have been the first thing to ascertain. But we were so absorbed in what we had discovered that we had no time to think of matter-of-fact details. But I presume we can remedy that now, as soon as we can find our new acquaintances again."

This was no great task. De Poincy, the Austrian, and Nonie had followed them down to the boat to take a look at the craft that had dropped so unceremoniously into their Eden. They

had not progressed very rapidly, however, as there had been some discussion between Binder and De Poincy, as to the treatment that should be accorded the strangers. Binder was for ridding the island of them as quickly as possible, and as De Poincy was only his guest the Austrian had rather the better of the argument. But De Poincy was maintaining manfully that the strangers should be made welcome, for the reason, if for no other, that Nonie should have some chance to see what people who lived in the outer world were like. The girl sided with De Poincy, and as soon as she had expressed her wish Binder became submissive to it.

When the two friends had come up with them, Mowbray put the question at once.

"Can you tell us," he asked, "what this land is? The captain is at sea, in more senses than one. We had supposed we were on our way to Captiva, when we drifted in here."

"To Captiva!" exclaimed Binder;

"what did you want there? No one ever goes to Captiva."

"So we have heard," was the answer; "but, you see, we wanted to be different from every one else. First of all, we wanted to find it. What would follow, we have not yet determined. But my friend and I have purchased it, although that seems not to have ended the transaction."

"This is Captiva," said the Austrian, slowly. "This land where you now stand is Captiva Island. And if you have bought it, you say truly that the transaction is not completed. Nonie and I own Captiva—and we two shall continue to own it."

There was that in his steady voice, and the quiet determination of his aspect, that said more for his courage and the tenacity of his purpose than much mere speech and the multiplication of words could have done. The others found time to admire the manner of the man, even while lost in surprise at this new discovery—that they had come unwittingly upon the

very place they were seeking—and even while they resented the threatening tone which was the undercurrent of his speech.

Whalen was the first to find words to answer, and he replied quietly, and with all his innate courtesy, speaking as much to Nonie as to the man whom he fronted.

"Ah!" he said; "I think you must be the one of whom we were told. You have some sort of squatter's rights here? We will consider that. We shall deal justly with you, my friend."

"Yes, you will deal justly with me, my friend," answered the Austrian, the conscious repetition of the other's words, and the half-mocking tone in strange contrast to the immobility of his face. "Yes," he continued, "that is so. And you will go as you have come, forgetting that you have bought Captiva."

"That sounds like a threat," said Whalen. "Let us talk this thing over like men. Perhaps our coming may

turn out not to be a bad matter for you. If you have a better right than we, I can promise you that it will be respected. If our right proves to be the better one, we shall look to you to do the same."

Binder answered nothing to this, but stood glowering at them as if he were half minded to prove by a trial of bodily strength as to whose was the better right. Whalen caught the look, and raised his hand warningly.

"Oh, no, my good fellow," he said, "there can be no use of that. We will reason this out like men, and I think there will be no cause for any trouble between us."

As Binder still made no answer, and seemed undecided how to regard this speech, De Poincy stepped forward with the grave air of an impartial arbitrator.

"That seems fair enough," he said. to Binder; and then turning to the others he added: "This is not my affair, except as I am interested in behalf of my good friends here. But you

must bear in mind that there are moral rights, as well as legal ones. On that ground I have no doubt that my friend Binder will prove a most excellent case, however much advantage you may have over him in any other way. At least, I can promise that you will hear an interesting story, one that is far stranger than the wildest imagining."

He turned from one to the other, as if asking their opinion of what he had said. Binder still stood his ground stoically, waiting for the others to speak.

"Yes," said Whalen, "that may be quite true. There may be moral rights, as well as legal. We will take them into consideration. Let us hear the story, of which you have spoken."

"It will be best to go to the cabin," said the Frenchman. And he motioned Binder to lead the way.

CHAPTER XI.

It was a strange group which gathered there, these whom chance had thrown together in so remote a nook, and whose purposes seemed so much at variance: the scientist, the men of the world, the social outcast and exile, and the beautiful untutored girl who had never known other home or other life than this.

As soon as they had come to the cabin, Whalen began, with slight preface. First he related to the others succinctly the story of the purchase of the island by himself and Mowbray. He gave as a reason for it the supposed deposits of phosphates, and told how they had been laughed at for thinking the island to be within the phosphate belt at all. But he called the Frenchman to witness how well their faith in

it had been warranted. He then told them something of the properties and commercial value of this material, so that they might understand that such an undertaking as himself and his friend had been engaged in was perfectly natural, from the standpoint of business men. This presentation of their case was of course well understood by Binder and the Frenchman, but was very much of a mystery to the young girl, to whom the ways of the great world were almost as a sealed book. Whalen went to much pains to explain it all to her, and said to her that he was merely a poor gentleman of fortune, whose fancy had been attracted by the enterprise, and that his friend had only joined him in it from good-fellowship. So that if any blame attached for their trespass on Captiva, it must be his alone.

After he had finished, the Austrian, at De Poincy's suggestion, retold his story, omitting no detail, and reading the journal aloud, as the Frenchman had read it before when they two were

alone. The young men listened with grave faces, and Richard Whalen with an emotion almost beyond control, as he learned that this was the story of that other Richard Whalen who had gone out from the world, and from all its joys and sorrows—so far as he could accomplish that by severing himself from human companionship—leaving him to carry the burden of the name and the cares of the fortune which could no longer be enjoyed by the one who had held it. To think that his uncle had come to this spot, and had lived out his life here so calmly—not without some burden of sorrow, it is true, for no man can get wholly beyond that while life and reason last—and that it was his daughter who sat there opposite him, with only a dawning realisation of the great drama that was playing about them: all this was so far beyond his wildest dreams, was so beyond the imaginings of romance, that he could with the greatest difficulty comprehend it all. But he absorbed and digested facts quickly, and

when Binder had finished he turned and spoke first to his friend.

"We were right, Carl," he said; "truly it was something more than chance that brought us here. It was the guiding of that destiny which never errs. I have felt it. I am not ashamed to acknowledge now that there is something of the fatalist about me. It is not of any use to try to shape our ends. Some mysterious Providence does that for us, with a more far-seeing divination than the mere human mind can compass."

He looked about the expectant group, pausing a moment at each face, but letting his eyes rest longest when they met those of his new-found cousin —who was yet all unaware of their relationship. Something in the look which she returned pleased him; for he smiled a little, and felt a sudden warming of his heart toward this child of nature whose rights he had so unwittingly usurped. Presently he said, quietly:

"I, too, have a strange story to tell.

Another, which does not concern myself alone."

And then he told once more the tale to which Mowbray had listened when his companion first proposed this undertaking. And while Whalen talked, the other contrasted in his mind the two scenes, and almost wondered if they could be the same men who had sat together at the breakfast-table in that window overlooking the brilliant avenue, such a little time ago. This was so different, and so much had happened since then, that he felt he had never tasted life until now.

The others listened to Whalen's story in a mute astonishment that changed to awe as he went on. Except that when he told them his own name, the Frenchman could not repress an exclamation of rapture at the dramatic climax. That the same man had written the strange letter to him, and the journal that the Austrian had read, could not be doubted by any. Nonie, as the whole truth dawned upon her, sat looking at him with wide

eyes. When he had finished there was silence for a little; and then Whalen rose and went to Nonie and took both her hands in his own.

"You are my cousin," he said; "it was your father who left me all that he had, and came away into this exile. I think we shall be friends, shall we not?" And then, smiling at her, he added, "I am ready now to do as you say about leaving the island—but I cannot forget it." He had turned, and included Binder in this speech.

"You have taken away all cause for quarrel," said the latter, extending his hand with ready frankness, as if to make amends for his former churlishness. "The island belongs to you and to Nonie. I shall be the one who will go away."

"No, indeed," answered Whalen; "you shall not go unless Nonie says so, and we all know that will not be. I think you have the best right here of any, because of what you have done for her. Besides, your work for her is not finished. I have reason to think

there is room enough, and work enough for us all, here." He paused a little, and seemed considering how he should best go on. "I have not told you quite all my story, yet," he said, presently. "From my uncle's diary you have seen that the old Spaniard, Nonie's grandfather, was driven here upon a search for treasure. And it appears that some search was made, during the time that he lived here, but without success. But after his death I fancy that my uncle did not go on with it very heartily. Now I have not come here to dig phosphates, however rich the field may be for that, but to complete this still richer task, that so many have essayed and failed at—of finding the buried treasure of Captiva. Like my uncle, I have been thrown upon this island by some inscrutable power, not knowing that it was the very place I sought. My friends, there is the purpose of a Providence in this. We have not yet seen the end of the curious story the centuries have been writing on the sands of Captiva."

He spoke with so much earnestness that his little audience caught something of his own spirit, and remained awestruck and silent when he had finished. And certainly there was enough, in this gathering here of the threads of these various lives, in the connection between the two Richard Whalens, and in the mingling of these two strange tales, to move the superstitious to a belief in some superhuman agency. This thought was with them all, and it was this which held them silent. The Frenchman was the first to recover himself.

"You have spoken truly, Richard Whalen," he said; "there is room and work and reward here for all. Some days ago, perhaps even while you were planning this search, I came upon the inlet into which you drifted—by chance, as you did; or by the will of Providence, if you like that better—not having known of its existence before. I saw at once that men had been there, had worked, and disturbed the soil. I looked about to see what

their purpose had been, and then I saw that the canal had been built by human hands, and not by nature. The reason for it is plain enough. About that there can be no guess-work, however much we may yet be in the dark about some other matters. It was built as a hiding-place by buccaneers. Many a galleon has run in there, laden with its ill-gotten treasure, to escape pursuit, or to rest and refit for other enterprises. It would be folly to doubt that where they hid themselves, there also they hid some of their treasure. That, and not my passion for scientific research alone, is what led me to uncover a portion of those banks, as I have shown you. When Binder placed this journal of your uncle in my hands, it gave me the key, and I then decided to do what I could for Nonie."

"I trust that you will still give us your aid," said Whalen; "I see that you are wiser in these things than I. And a man who has reasoned so far and so well, by the process of induc-

tion, will not have much further to go along the same lines until he can put his hand upon that for which we seek."

"I shall aid you, with all my heart," said the Frenchman, cordially, giving Whalen his hand. "I could have no more delightful task than to sift out theories, and search out the fact which I doubt not lies hidden at the bottom of them. We will work together, and prove whether or not Captiva is a true treasure island."

"I think I have already proven that," returned Whalen, indicating Nonie, by a glance to where she stood. "I should consider my effort well repaid, if we found nothing further. But for her sake, more than for my own, I hope we shall succeed. I can see that there is much that may be done —that must be done—for her."

After this they fell into a discussion of the plans for their work, for it was now definitely agreed that a systematic search should be made for the treasure which all believed the island to con-

tain, and the methods by which the interests of all could be harmoniously combined, and their proposed work pushed ahead to the best advantage. In spite of the protest of the others, Whalen insisted upon an understanding by which each one should have some part in whatever should be found to reward their labors. It was decided that Binder should continue as *major domo* of the island, making it his duty to provide for the material wants of the little colony, and giving such assistance as he might to the work in hand. De Poincy was to continue his scientific investigations as he might choose, but he was also to put his practical and scientific knowledge at the disposal of the others in their joint endeavour to uncover the treasure. The division, in case they were successful, was to be arranged as follows: One-tenth to the Austrian, and the same to De Poincy, in full payment for their services. One-half the balance to Nonie, as the virtual owner of the island. And the remainder to be

divided between Whalen and Carl Mowbray, upon the original understanding that they were to be partners in the enterprise, although Carl stoutly declared he was having fun enough out of it to pay him well, without thought of further gain.

This business being completed, the next thing to which Whalen set his hand was to make over to Nonie, in proper form, the entire property which had come to him from her father. This he considered a mere act of justice, although the girl opposed it as strongly as she could and with all the arguments that her limited knowledge of life and of affairs could command. In the discussion of this, and of all other matters which came up in their new-found relation, Whalen was more than surprised to find in his cousin so much intelligence, so much sensibility, such fair and accurate ideas regarding the great world which she had never seen. She possessed more than the rudiments of an education, and he learned that both his uncle and her

grandfather, the old Spaniard, had brought many books with them into this strange retirement; and from these, as well as from the richly stored mind of her father she had been taught. In both Spanish and English she was so ready that it was difficult to say which was her native tongue. And to these Binder, who was no mean scholar, had added some knowledge of German. So that while she was unschooled, she was yet far from ignorant, and Whalen quickly determined that she would adorn the circle to which she was fitted by birth, and into which he meant to take her as soon as this enterprise was brought to a conclusion.

After a long talk with Binder, Whalen came to have a better appreciation of the peculiar mania which had possessed his uncle regarding the source of his fortune; and had he not now found one who had a far better right to it than himself, he would have had perhaps no further scruples about retaining it. He even began to doubt

if there were not some romance about that portion of his uncle's diary that spoke of his having been cast away upon the island, and thought that he might rather have chosen it voluntarily as a place of exile. That he had brought there with him his most treasured books, some scientific instruments, and other things that a man of his training and taste would naturally have chosen for lightening the solitude of his retirement, lent colour to this supposition. All these things, he found afterward, Nonie had carefully treasured in her cabin by the inlet, and they were such as suggested abundant leisure in their selection. Studying these, and thinking upon it all, he even began to question if his uncle had not been spurred toward Captiva by somewhat the same idea that had taken possession of himself? But to this, there was now no chance of obtaining answer, and soon they were so occupied with present interests that little opportunity was had for reflections upon the past.

CHAPTER XII.

THE search for the treasure was now entered upon with a method and directness that forestalled, as nearly as human intelligence and endeavour could accomplish that, the possibility of failure. The captain and crew of the schooner were taken away from their pearl-fishing and pressed into service, with the promise of a rich reward if their efforts were successful. The astonishment of the captain, when he learned that this had been the true destination and purpose of the expedition from the start, was laughable in its seriousness.

He entered into the work with a good will. De Poincy planned the operations, and Whalen and Carl directed their practical execution. It was the first definite labour to which

either had ever given a thought in their whole lives; but they plunged into it with the ardour and strength of youth, almost more impatient to see their theories vindicated than to realise the material gain that would come from the hoped for conclusion of their efforts. But while they worked thus, and gave their whole souls to this one thing to which they had set their hands, perhaps neither took more satisfaction in it than they did in the long hours of the brilliant tropic nights, when this strange group of friends would sit together beneath the orange- and the palm-trees and watch the stars, and recount the curious chances that had brought them to each other, and to such a place. Often at these times Nonie would sing to them some strange wild song, self-taught, full of weird melodies; or De Poincy would tell, with all of a Frenchman's vivacity, some story of his wide wanderings; or the captain would recite some ghostly tale of the sea. And then, to crown it all, Whalen would tell some legend of

piracy or treasure-trove, perhaps some story of adventure enacted long ago in that very sea, and gleaned by him from some old black-letter. But for none of these did Nonie care so much as for Carl's vivid and brilliant descriptions of the life that he knew best, and she least of all—the life of the cities, of the great pulsing heart of the wide human world, that had been as yet a sealed book to the girl, but which now, hearing of, she longed to open and read.

She had come to look upon Whalen as her natural guardian, by reason of this new relationship that he had discovered between them, and it was touching to see her timid dependence on him, and her eager and complete trust in him for the shaping of her future. After listening rapturously to Carl as long as she could induce him to talk, she would turn to the other and ask when she might be taken to see all this with her own eyes.

"You shall go there soon, Nonie," he would say; "but we must first fin-

ish our task here. You know I have my fortune to make." He would conclude with a laugh, under which Carl could detect a shade of serious meaning.

"You know very well there is enough for us both, without that," the girl would answer, a little petulantly; for again and again had she urged him that he should retain at least the half of that which had so long been his own. But he was steadfast in his purpose.

At times De Poincy, watching both men with his wise eyes, thought that both cared more to be with Nonie than to prosecute their search for the treasure. Yet the work went on steadily and methodically from day to day. The Frenchman had explained that it was his idea that the treasure—if treasure there was—would have been hidden close to the banks of the canal in order that it might have been more quickly recovered when occasion demanded. So a systematic uncovering of the surface of the ground was

undertaken, from the mouth of the inlet to its furthest end, and so far back from it on either side as De Poincy had found any evidence of the disturbance of the soil. In this undertaking, which was one involving more labour than any but the Frenchman had thought, days passed quickly into weeks. The first spur and excitement passed away, and as the dull labour of digging grew ever more monotonous, and their search was unrewarded, the captain and the crew of the schooner began to complain.

"We shall be in a pretty pickle to explain what we have been up to all this time, if we ever get the vessel back to her owners," said the captain at last. "I, for one, think we would have been wiser to go on with our pearl-fishing. Then we would have had something to show for it, and without all this back-breaking work."

Finally he insisted on posting a lookout each morning, to keep sharp watch for any sail that might come in sight, and to signal it to their relief.

Whalen objected to this, as he wanted no visitors until their search was ended. When they were quite ready he doubted not they could find a way to leave the island. But Binder only shrugged his shoulders philosophically at the captain's efforts.

"They will not come," he said, quietly, out of the latter's hearing; "the sailors in these waters believe the island is bewitched, and so keep their distance. They think there is a siren here who would lure them on to destruction, if they but come within sight or sound. We need fear no company."

"Then the myth of the *Lorelei* is of some use," said Whalen. "So we will let the skipper fly his signals to his heart's content."

It was as Binder had said, for no sail showed above their horizon. Then as time went on and they met with no reward for their continued labour, and as hope began to grow less even with the most sanguine, the captain announced that he should make

ready his largest boat and put off in that, with his men, and make for some point from which they could bring help to draw the schooner out. And for the comfort of the treasure-seekers he added that he hoped they would have a fine bill for demurrage to pay the owners, in case they were ever fortunate enough to get back to port.

With the greatest difficulty he was finally persuaded to delay his attempt for another week, and to give his aid heartily to the work for that time. And he would not have yielded in this had not Carl taken him privately aside and promised him good compensation and protection against all loss, whether they were at last successful or not.

It was only a day or two after this that De Poincy, searching with his trained eye every foot of ground in the hope that he might discover some new clew, noticed that the soil at a certain point gave unmistakable evidence of later disturbance than at any other. He called the attention of Whalen to this, and urged that work be undertaken anew at that spot.

It was morning when they began to follow this new indication, and the Frenchman's enthusiasm and certainty that they were at last upon the right track soon communicated itself to all hands, so that they worked with unwonted willingness. But when night came, and Whalen sorrowfully told the men to cease work and rest until the morrow, no bit of evidence had been found to corroborate the Frenchman's prophecy. Then discouragement and silence settled down upon the little camp, such as it had not before known. It was just as the word had been given to stop, that one of the men drove his mattock into the ground with a force that was meant to emphasise his disbelief in the utility of their undertaking, and found it caught and held there by some substance other than the yielding earth.

Mowbray, regretting more on his friend's account than on his own, the failure which now appeared almost certain, was still watching every stroke that the men made. When he saw

that something out of the usual order had attracted the workman's attention, he was beside him in an instant. Seizing another mattock, he dug rapidly but carefully down until he could see that the first tool had caught in a heavy piece of wood. At first, this seemed to be all. But with another stroke he saw that this wood was of definite form and shape. A little more, and that it was the cover of a solid chest, which was held together by metal bands.

Now all was excitement, where apathy had been before. The men clustered about, anxious to be of service. As the brief tropic twilight died wholly away and the night came on, Binder quickly made some torches of light pine and set them burning. These threw a queer fitful radiance over the weird scene—leaving the workers now in shadow, and again revealing them in the full glare of the light, but serving well the purpose of enabling them to finish the removal of the earth in which the box was imbedded.

CHAPTER XIII.

As soon as the box had been loosened the men lifted it up from the pit in which it had lain, and Mowbray struck the metal bands a few stout blows, amid the almost breathless silence of the group about him. No word had been spoken, but all had gathered close around. As the last fastening gave way the lid of the chest fell apart, and revealed such a sight as none there had ever witnessed—such an one as even the most sanguine of them had hardly dared to hope for—and such as they would never witness again in all the world. Full to overflowing was the chest, with bright gold pieces that shimmered and twinkled in the flickering lustrous glare of the torches. Jewels, mixed in wanton disorder among them, sparkled with a

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hundred tints and colours, matching with their radiance the light from the stars above. Beyond any question of the most arrant doubter, this was the very treasure for which they had sought. It was the gain and hidings of some old buccaneer, looted red-handed from the rich homes of Panama and Caracas and the many other ill-fated cities of the Spanish Main, in the old days when the first Richard Whalen had adapted himself so easily to the law that might made right.

For a little, each one stood gazing at the chest, and at the wonderful spoil it held, as silently as though they stood about an open grave. Then, when the full meaning and immensity of the discovery finally burst upon them, each manifested his appreciation of it in a different way. The captain could only give vent to his feelings through the medium of a few round oaths. His men remained looking at the treasure in gaping, wide-mouthed wonder. Binder regarded it with even more than his customary

stoicism. The Frenchman with many and varied ejaculations which testified to a wise understanding of its material value. In Nonie there was enough of the barbaric element to be charmed with the glitter of the gold and the sparkle of the jewels, and she threw herself upon it and plunged her bared arms into the depths of the shining mass and tossed the yellow coins about her in wild profusion. Only the two friends appeared to regard it as a wholly natural and expected discovery, a fitting conclusion to the whole affair that had so long engaged them, and they went presently very methodically to the business of computing its value. In this they were assisted by the Frenchman, and they had wearied even of handling such treasure before they had finished with it.

With the acquirement of possessions, the cupidity of man's nature—however dormant it may have lain for the nonce—rises and asserts itself. Neither Mowbray nor Richard Whalen was avaricious nor wont to be suspicious

of his fellows. And their experience thus far had certainly given them little cause to think that the colony on Captiva could be the object of a free-booting attack from the open sea. Yet it seemed to them wise that this sudden acquisition of wealth called for more than their ordinary caution, and that it should at once be placed under their own careful guardianship; and that it might be so they set about conveying it at once to the cabin that had formerly been Binder's but which had been turned over to the use of the two friends.

The grouping of the little handful of souls had been re-arranged after the last addition to its numbers. The friends, as I have said, had taken possession of the cabin that Binder had occupied so long, and which was near the shore. A little further inland a new and more sumptuous one had been built for Nonie, and furnished with everything the schooner could provide toward its comfort or luxury. There, guarded by her two faithful

dogs, she seemed to Whalen to be more safe than elsewhere, as she was almost within call from their own cabin, and directly between that and the one which De Poincy and the Austrian had newly built for themselves, just beyond. While further away, the captain and his men still kept their quarters upon the schooner.

It was well into the night before they separated. After such a day of excitement, with such a conclusion, there was much to be discussed by them all, but especially by the two moving spirits of the enterprise. So Whalen and Carl talked long about the final disposition of the treasure and made plans that were far-reaching into the future, sitting the while at the door of their cabin where a long sweep could be had toward the open sea.

The great moon rose slowly up toward the zenith and made the night rich with its yellow light. The host of stars that had twinkled down at them and had vied with the sparkle of the gold and the jewels, died out un-

der this more brilliant radiance and left pale Luna to shine alone in the whole vast apse. The calm lapping of the waves made music on the beach. All nature conspired to make the scene one of perfect quiet, of calm repose, yet by some strange quip the very contrast of it with what had happened there before took the thoughts of both back to the days and scenes of bloody rapine that had doubtless been too often witnessed upon that very shore. Could it be that the same placid moon and the merry shining stars had looked down too upon old Lolonius and his pirate crew, and upon that first Richard Whalen, because of whose evil deeds they were here now? It was this thought that forced itself upon the mind of the young Richard Whalen and led him to voice it to his companion.

"We have had a full measure of success," he said; "more than would have been easily believed, were we to tell it. So far as the main object of our expedition is concerned, we have

come to the finish. And I am afraid we shall have to be content with getting their treasure, and without an actual encounter with those buccaneers who left it here, and whom you hoped to still find roving about. You see, Carl, you have come into the world too late."

"Yes," assented the other, lazily, "it *was* dull work to dig the box out of the sand, when we think they who brought it here won it by sword and blood. It was probably even buried to the accompaniment of new-made skull and cross-bones. I wonder we did not find such relics upon the chest! What a difference," he went on, with more animation, "between our schooner, sailing down here so quietly that she stuck her nose in the mud of Captiva before we had even sighted the land we were in search of, and those swift galleons, with their boisterous, roystering crews, sweeping along proudly, a terror to the seas, pausing only to hide in one place that which had been stolen in another."

"You are quite right," said Whalen; "I can imagine how that life held its charm. The freedom of it, the mastery over others, the feeling that one could let the human passions in him have full sway—to murder, rob, burn, without the reproach of conscience; that, of course, was better than the commonplace way in which we have reached the same end—the attainment of the gold and the jewels."

"Oh, well," laughed Carl, "if you are going to agree with me so readily, I think I will turn in. And I would advise you to do the same, for tomorrow we must set our wits at work to devise some means for getting out of here, although I confess I am in no hurry to leave the enchanted island."

While his companion was speaking, Whalen had risen to his feet and was now gazing intently out over the open water. Beckoning to Carl, he pointed to a distant speck that could be faintly discerned for an instant, seemingly upon the crest of a swelling wave, and again was lost to sight in the hollow

of the sea. Once more it appeared, and was again as quickly hidden. The moonlight, bright as it was, still was an uncertain aid by which to distinguish objects so far away. The two watched this floating speck silently for a long time. So faint was it that more than once they thought their eyes had deceived them, and that it was but the reflection of the light on the dimpling water. But at last, and at the same moment, they turned toward each other with the same word forming upon their lips—"A sail!"

CHAPTER XIV.

As the two companions stood and watched, it drew nearer and nearer, growing swiftly larger and more distinct, taking on definite form and substance before their eyes, and keeping its course steadily toward them. As it came up from the misty distance they could at first distinguish the sails and spars, which caught the moonlight and were silhouetted against the background of the sky, and then the dark mass of the hull, and finally were able to make out that it was a vessel of some size. She was schooner-rigged, and had all canvas spread to catch the light breeze. Thus she made way with considerable rapidity, although upon the shore the night seemed very still, and soon every detail could be observed. For an hour

they watched, and an indefinable fear grew in the heart of each, so silently, so steadily, with so set a purpose did the stranger draw upon them. When the craft at last was no more than a mile away, Mowbray spoke.

"She will come ashore. If there is a lookout, he should see the land. It is light enough. Every man on board must be asleep. If they strike, at that speed, and carrying so much sail, the vessel will go to pieces."

Before the other could answer there was some visible commotion upon the schooner. The sails began to rattle down, and the boat lost its headway. The sawing sound of the hawser as it paid out, came to them across the still water, and they knew that the anchor was being let go. But there was no sound of voices, no giving of orders, so that it might have been manned by a phantom crew, so far as any life could be descried upon it. It gave them an uncanny feeling, as they watched, and brought to mind the tales they had heard of the super-

stitions held by the sailors about the island. But presently the schooner rounded to and showed them her bare spars and sharp, clean outlines. Now they could make out moving figures upon the deck. Presently two boats were let down from the vessel's side and filled with men. Then came the steady plash, plash of oars, at first faintly, and then louder and louder as the boats grew from the distance and came nearer. The silence that the people in them still maintained made this waiting and watching almost intolerable, as the suspicion merged into certainty that it must be foes and not friends whose coming they watched. Friends would have sent some hail, for by this the men in the boats could see distinctly the two upon the shore. Only foes would steal on so swift and silent.

Whalen, at last tired of waiting for them to make some sign, was about to hail, when he heard a footstep behind him and turned to see Binder approaching. The quiet and stoical

bearing of the latter had vanished, and he was nervously excited.

"I don't like that," he said. "I have been watching them a long time. I have not slept to-night. I think it would be well if they do not land. Remember what we have here."

"Yes, but it is impossible they should know of that," was Whalen's reply; although the Austrian had only voiced the fear that was half formed in the minds of each of the others.

Binder significantly touched the butt of a pistol that protruded from his pocket.

"I think I would find out what they want," he urged again.

"That will do no harm," said Whalen, turning to his friend, half questioningly. The other nodded his assent, and Whalen called out stertorously—"Boat ahoy!"

There was no cessation in the rythmic music of the plashing oars, no pause in the onward movement of the boats that still drew toward them, lessening the distance to the shore with great leaps at every stroke.

"Boat ahoy!" shouted Whalen again; and after a moment of impatient waiting he cried once more—"Boat ahoy!" and then: "Tell us your errand before you come any closer, or we shall fire."

At this a voice from the boat which was nearest them answered:

"We are from the schooner *Ladybird*, and we are out of water. We want to land and fill our butts."

After a hurried consultation with his companions Whalen called again:

"Let one boat stop where it is. The other may come on."

He judged there were not more than six men in either, and felt there could be no danger in permitting one to come near enough for further conference. The three now waited, standing close together, until the keel of the boat grated on the sand. Then the sailor who had spoken before stood up in the stern and they could see that he was a rough, uncouth fellow, with a dark, brutish face, and a powerful truncated body that would have done

no disgrace to any of the old buccaneers themselves. Yet when he spoke, it was civilly enough.

"We are bound from Trinidad to New Orleans," he said; "three days ago our water butts sprung aleak, and we lost our whole supply. This is the first land we have sighted, and we started at once to look for water. We are almost dead from thirst."

His voice sounded coarse and husky, as if he did in truth speak with difficulty, and it occurred to Whalen that this might be the reason why they had heard no orders shouted upon the vessel. The thought threw him a little off his guard. But Mowbray, keeping his keen eyes alert while the attention of the other was attracted by the spokesman, saw that two of the men had climbed quietly out of the boat and were drawing closer to his friend. He fancied there was something sinister in their movements, and he dropped his hand into his pocket and clutched his revolver, at the same time moving nearer to Whalen, who had inad-

vertently put some distance between them. Binder, equally alert, seemed actuated by the same thought, and took a step forward. The leader of the boat's crew saw this, and at once threw off all disguise.

"At them, men!" he cried; and with the words he flung himself from the boat and upon Whalen, simultaneously with the two others who stood nearest him, while the balance of the crew interposed so as to cut them off and thus prevent Whalen's friends from coming to his rescue.

Their action had been so sudden that, though partially upon their guard, neither of the three men had time nor opportunity to fire upon their assailants. But both Mowbray and Binder now at once opened fire upon the men who stood between them, and with such good effect that they soon had a path cleared to their companion. But in the meantime the other boat had come up, and the battle was now at the serious odds of a dozen against three. Carl had seen the gleam of a knife in

the hands of one of the men who had attacked his friend, but the latter was still upon his feet and sending sledge-hammer blows at the ruffian who crowded him so closely that he had no chance to use his pistols in his own defense. Carl fought desperately to reach him, but could make little head-way. Finding himself close to Binder, he made a sudden rush which put him back to back with the Austrian, and with that position gained they were able to use their pistols with more effect, and with less danger of wounding each other.

Now for a little time it was a pandemonium of swirling forms and swinging blows, of gleaming knives and the sharp crack of pistols, of cries and curses on the part of the sailors and of grim, silent, desperate fighting on the part of the three who were struggling against such overwhelming odds. But at last the power of numbers told, and they found the contest gradually narrowing, themselves being pressed harder and more closely each

moment. A little longer, contesting step by step, struggling to the very end, and the two friends, bleeding from a dozen wounds, were made captive, while the Austrian lay senseless upon the ground. Three of the ruffians lay dead, within the space of a dozen feet.

"Look you, my men," snarled the one who seemed to command, as soon as he could find breath to speak; "you will have to pay well for this. Three of as good fellows as ever put foot on deck, dead now because you did not have sense enough to know when you were beat. Now tell us as quickly as you may, what you have found on this cursed island. We have waited and watched you until we are tired. Tell us what precious loot you have gotten for your pains, and where it is hidden now?"

But the fellow little knew with what manner of men he had to deal. While they would have counted it an unworthy thing in them to have given up their lives for the treasure, or be-

cause of any miserable beggarly love for gold, they would now have suffered almost any torment before obeying the behest of this scoundrel. Both men shut their teeth, and struggled fiercely against the cords with which their arms and limbs had been tightly bound.

"Come," said the ruffian, impatiently, touching first one and then the other with the toe of his boot; "it will be better for you if you do not give us too much trouble. This is not a place that sailors much like, at the best, and we have no mind to stay until we may be set upon by some of your men, whom you have hidden somewhere about. Let us have whatever you have found here, be it much or little, and we will be off."

It was in the nature of both men that they attempted no subterfuge, that it did not enter their minds to deny the finding of any treasure. And if they had thought of such a means for ridding themselves of their unwelcome companions they would have

scorned to employ it, even in so desperate a case as was theirs now.

Finding that they would not speak, much less do his bidding, the fellow was looking about for some means by which he might enforce his commands, and was even fingering his pistols impatiently again, when he was startled by an apparition that suddenly made toward him. Running, with feet so light that they seemed hardly to touch the ground, Nonie came out from the fringe of palms that hid the inner island from the beach and sped along the sands to where the men were grouped about the prostrate forms of her friends. At seeing them lying there she flung herself down beside them with a cry of horror, and was about to undo the cords that bound them, when the leader, recovering in a measure from his astonishment at this unexpected vision, gruffly interposed.

"Not so fast, my lady," he said, putting his hand upon her; "get your friends to have a little common-sense, and tell us what they have found, and

where they have made another hiding of it, and they may soon enough go free."

Nonie drew herself up and threw the scoundrel's hand from her and hesitated for a moment, looking from one to the other of her friends for instructions. Both men exclaimed at once against obeying the order.

"You had best do it, Missie," said the fellow, raising his pistol ominously; "I shall not fool with them much longer, if you don't."

"And you will let them go, if I tell you?"

"You can rest easy about that," he laughed coarsely; "we don't want our boat bothered with any such luggage as that. It would only be in our way."

"Then I will tell you," she said, making quick decision; and before the others could again interpose she had directed them to the cabin, and the leader—himself remaining behind to watch over his captives—had sent his men to search where she said. They soon returned, bearing the chest in

triumph on their shoulders. Their master gave but one quick glance at it.

"That is what we have been waiting for, a good many years. I always told you, my lads, that if any one dug it up, they would do it for us. Into the boat with it now, and we will see what is inside of it later on. This pays us well for the night's work, and fills our water-butts finely. Now let us be off." He spoke grimly, but at the last laughed at his own jest, and then turned to the men who were helpless before him.

"Thanks for your lift, my mates. This is a good turn that you have done us. We have had our minds on this for a long time, but not knowing just where to look, we waited for you to show us. Hearing that your boat had come this way some time since, we followed as speedily as we could, and it seems we were just in the nick of time. I was afraid that we might be too late."

By this his men were in the boats,

and only waiting for the other to join them before casting off. He took a step toward them, as if about to do so. Then he paused, and turning back threw his arms about Nonie and lifted her, shrieking, into the boat with him. The two men on the shore made frenzied efforts to release themselves, that they might go to her aid, but each movement seemed only to make their bonds tighter and they were powerless to prevent Nonie from being carried away before their eyes.

CHAPTER XV.

At first the girl struggled so frantically that it seemed as if the boat would be capsized, and it required all the effort of her captors to keep the craft upright, and to retain her in it. She endeavoured to release herself, but soon found this had only the effect of making the ruffian hold her the more closely, and to show her how futile it was to pit her strength against his. So after a little she decided to substitute strategy for force, as she had no notion of being carried away to the vessel, and so sat quietly in the stern of the boat where she had been placed, as if convinced of the futility of any attempt to regain her freedom. As soon as the fellow saw this, and saw, too, that his oarsmen had put considerable distance between themselves

and the land, he released his hold upon her and gave his attention to his men and to the course of the boat.

Nonie now waited, with all the self-control that she could command, until quite certain that he was paying no further attention to her. Then, summoning all her courage and strength for the effort, she threw herself backward with a sudden spring and disappeared beneath the water.

With a great oath the man was upon his feet on the instant, and peering anxiously down into the black depths. But the momentum of the boat had already carried them some distance from the immediate spot where she had gone down, and the water made no sign to tell where she was hidden. The sailors rested on their oars, or rowed slowly in a circle, while he narrowly scanned the sea all about. But nothing was visible on the whole of its smooth surface and he was finally forced to conclude that she had gone down forever, preferring death to capture ; so he gave orders to his men to

dip their oars once more and row on to the vessel.

Meanwhile, not a hundred yards away from the boat Nonie floated, as much at home in the water as upon the land, keeping her body hidden beneath the waves while her mouth and nostrils were just enough above them to give her the air which would sustain life until the danger of discovery was past. Then, swimming quietly, she managed to put more distance between them, and when the boat had finally gone on she struck out boldly and swiftly for the shore.

The apprehension that had filled the minds of the two friends as they saw Nonie borne into the boat had left them a prey to worse torments than they suffered from their wounds. Their utter inability to make any effort toward her rescue only made their own position the more intolerable. It would have been some satisfaction if they could have fought for her, even though against such odds that their lives would have surely paid the pen-

alty. They kept their eyes fastened upon the boat, and had seen the commotion and delay, but could not guess its cause. And when they finally saw the boats back at the schooner's side, and could distinguish the preparations that were being made to get the latter under weigh, they almost abandoned hope that they should ever see her again.

It was as they were at the very depths of this despairing thought that Nonie reached the shore, and drawing herself up out of the water like a sea-nymph she sprang lightly along the beach, calling out their names as she ran toward them. To the two friends it seemed that little short of a miracle had happened. She set to work at once, unfastening their cords with a swift and gentle dexterity, and giving an account of her own escape as she did so. Then she began to look carefully after their hurts. Binder was not forgotten in this, and being soon restored to consciousness it was found that he had been more

severely wounded than the others. A pistol shot in his shoulder had torn an ugly hole, which it required the united surgery of the three to dress. Whalen found himself cut in a half dozen places, but no wound deep enough to give cause for alarm, although he was much weakened from the loss of blood. Mowbray had escaped both knife and pistol, but was bruised and sore from the fists, kicks and clubs of their assailants.

Looking seaward they could now discern the vessel spreading sail, and so thankful were they at Nonie's escape, and so glad to be rid of their unwelcome visitors that at first none of them gave thought to the treasure of which they had been robbed. Binder was the first to speak of it, and was answered by a cry of dismay from Mowbray.

"Well," said Whalen, philosophically, "we can do nothing now. They have the whip hand, and we are lucky to get away with our lives. But I am sorry, Nonie, that your fortune has so suddenly disappeared."

"I have still Captiva," said the girl; "I can never be poor with that."

Binder at these words turned toward her with a look of grateful appreciation. To him this search for the treasure, this frenzied upsetting of the established life of his beloved island, had from the first seemed a very foolish thing. He had borne with it, because it had seemed to be for Nonie's sake. But now that the gold was found, and so quickly lost again beyond possible recovery, he hoped the interlopers would also go and leave him once more in quiet possession.

With the dawn the knowledge of the events of the night came to the others upon the island. Great was the wrath of the captain when he learned what had happened.

"I thought once in the night that I heard some row," he said; "if I and my men had taken care of the chest, those fellows would not have gotten it, I can tell you. And now how are we to be paid for the time we have

wasted?" He was for at once making some strenuous effort to get the schooner out of the inlet, that he might go in pursuit. But as he suggested no practical method for accomplishing that end, the others did not give him much encouragement.

De Poincy was a wise man, as well as a scientist, and so he took the matter philosophically.

"If I had been here," he said, "I should probably have had my head broken, and to no good end. It is just as well that I was out of it."

There was now nothing to do but make preparations for leaving the island. A further stay would avail nothing, as it was hardly to be supposed that any other treasure yet awaited the finding; although De Poincy did make a suggestion of such a possibility, to which Whalen for a little time seemed disposed to give consideration. But his duties toward Nonie finally decided him against it.

To Binder's consternation he found that the preparations now begun for

leaving Captiva included also taking away Nonie. This he had not before thought of. But Whalen was steadfast in saying that it was his place, as her only relative, to constitute himself her guardian, and take her into the world and to give her that position to which she was entitled; a view of the matter in which Nonie readily acquiesced. Having still the fortune of her father, which he had made over to her, enabled Whalen to see his way clearly notwithstanding the loss of the treasure.

The difficulty of getting away now became a matter for the most serious consideration. The schooner could not be taken out of the inlet until some other vessel was first brought to its assistance. The schooner's yawl was the most seaworthy craft at their command, but that was an exceedingly frail thing in which to attempt so long a trip as the one now before them. Yet this had to be done, unless they were all willing to wait indefinitely for the chance of a sail coming that way,

and their past experience did not encourage them to rely on that.

Whalen insisted that himself, in company with the captain, should make the endeavour to get to some port from which they could bring aid to the others. So they fitted and provisioned the boat and set out, with grave faces behind them.

"We shall have a ship here in a few days," said Whalen to Nonie, trying to cheer her because she had looked so dolorous at seeing him about to leave her; "then you shall set sail to see the world, from which you have too long been hidden."

The cruise upon which they were starting was one replete with the possibilities of danger. Their craft was small and insecure. They were able to carry provisions only sufficient to last them a week, at the very utmost. They must lay their course by guesswork, through a sea unfrequented by vessels, so that there was little chance of succour should they find themselves in desperate straits. But for once

fortune favoured them, which may have been due to the fact that Whalen took the direction of all matters into his own hands, forcing the captain into rather unwilling subjection to his leadership. Thus, before the week for which he had prepared was quite gone, he had the intense satisfaction of being seated once more in the office of the superintendent of the steamship company, whose aid he and Mowbray had invoked when starting upon their expedition.

The superintendent welcomed him back most heartily, and listened attentively to his account of their adventures, the search for and finding of the treasure, and its loss at last. His attention deepened into the most absorbed interest at the dramatic conclusion, and as he listened he nodded his head wisely at some portions of the story which seemed to be in harmony with his own ideas, and at others looked upon Whalen searchingly, as if to determine whether it were all strictly true. At the ending

of the strange narrative he appeared to be wholly satisfied as to that.

He remained silent, buried in thought, for a little time after the younger man had finished. His sharp eyes, peering out from under shaggy brows, searched the face of his companion. At last he said:

"As far as the treasure is concerned, it is a case of diamond cut diamond. That you will have to acknowledge. Those fellows learned of your purpose, in some manner, and seem to have had the good luck to strike just when the iron was hot. Of course, that part of it was pure chance. No," he went on, in answer to Whalen's question, "I do not think it will be of any use to try to capture them. I might hazard a guess as to who it was; but there are so many lawless prowlers in these seas that one cannot speak with much certainty. But I will keep my eyes open. They may be careless enough to discover themselves to me. But, my dear fellow," he added suddenly, as if a new thought had just occurred to

him, "your voyage may not have been as profitless as you now think."

"It has not been profitless," answered Whalen, "for I have discovered my cousin. That alone will outweigh all else. But beyond that, and as regards any financial profit, I cannot see much of a silver lining to the cloud that these robbers have thrown over our hopes." He looked questioningly at the superintendent, wondering as to his meaning.

"You forget," the other replied, smiling, "that you tried to make me think this phosphate, that you say you unearthed in such abundance while digging for the treasure, was the main object of your expedition."

Whalen blushed at this, and began to murmur some apology.

"Oh, it was quite right," said the other; "I did not tell my suspicions to any one. In such matters it is always well to keep one's own counsel—yet it seems that some one must have had at least an inkling of your true plans. But about this phosphate," he con-

tinued; "perhaps you do not know that while you have been digging away there, after your Spanish gold and jewels, all phosphate lands have been enjoying a genuine boom? If yours is as rich as seems to be the case, your island still has a buried fortune beneath its soil. A representative of an English syndicate is now here, buying everything he can get his hands on. If you wish, you can arrange with him to go over and look at your find."

Whalen looked up, as if in a dream. "The phosphate," he said, "I had forgotten all about. I knew its value, as soon as we reached Captiva. So did Mowbray. So, I think, did De Poincy. But in the excitement of the search for the treasure, and in its loss, we had forgotten this wholly. I think you are right—and that the best part of our venture may yet be to come."

Arrangements for a small steamer to take them back to Captiva were speedily completed. The Englishman, to whom Whalen had been introduced by the superintendent, went upon the

same boat, and arrangements were also made for getting the schooner out of its predicament, as well as for bringing away the balance of the party. Immediately upon their arrival the Englishman set about making a careful examination of the deposits, not only where they had been uncovered in the search for the treasure, but also wherever about the island he found indications of the existence of phosphates. So great was his surprise at the richness and extent of the beds that he could hardly conceal his desire to obtain possession at once. Nevertheless, he made several attempts to belittle their value, which had no effect upon Whalen, who had taken the precaution to learn all that he could about the commercial aspects of the case before returning. Finally all subterfuges were abandoned and the proffer made of the round sum of a half million dollars for all privileges in the deposits. This, after a conference with all his companions in the treasure search, was accepted, with the

provision that Binder should have the privilege of remaining on the island, and that its exclusive ownership should revert to him after the mining operations were concluded. All effort to make the Austrian accept any share of the purchase money proved futile. His only desire was to remain among and in possession of the groves and the gardens that he had planted, and that he had tended so long and with so much care. And so they left him there, contented with his lot, but honestly mourning Nonie's departure when the others bade a final adieu to Captiva, and to the romance that clustered about it.

CHAPTER XVI.

At Port Tampa the party lost another of its members, De Poincy leaving them, richer by a handsome sum than his profession of scientist would ever have made him, for Whalen insisted that the division should be the same that had been previously agreed upon in case the treasure was found. It gave De Poincy much food for merriment to think that the source of this wealth, which came to them unsought at last, had been recognised in the very beginning, and driven out of their minds by the will-o'-the-wisp of the treasure search. It was indeed strange to think how subsequent events had wholly driven this prosaic matter from their minds, and how they would have left the island at last no richer because of it, had it not been for the sugges-

tion of the superintendent, and the fortunate presence of the Englishman. The two friends, remembering how they had built their plans upon it, that hour in the schooner's cabin, could never cease wondering that it could have been so wholly forgotten by them.

And now, all questions of money having been settled, the problem of Nonie's future arose before them.

In determining this, Mowbray became again a person of foremost importance. Carl Mowbray was a fortunate man. To Whalen he seemed more fortunate in this than in all else—that he possessed a mother and sisters. And that they, while living in and being part of the great world, were not trammeled by fear of what it would say, was also most fortunate. To them Carl and his friend went with Nonie, and with the problem of her future. And Mrs. Mowbray, hearing her story, took her at once to her own heart and home and care.

"You may rest quite easy," she said to Whalen, not very long after Nonie

had been installed in her home; "you have nothing to fear. Your cousin will do you credit. While she has lived out of the world, she has yet a very just appreciation of it, and will soon enough adapt herself to its ways. It is really wonderful, to see how little she is at a loss. And she is so sweet and modest, it almost makes me wonder whether the training of our boasted civilisation is so vastly ahead of that of nature, as we have been accustomed to think. But heredity has something to do with it."

And in truth, Nonie proved to be a very wonderful person. This clever and wise woman of the world procured for the island girl the best tutors, the best companions, and gave her every advantage that had been bestowed upon her own daughters; and the consequence was that Nonie rapidly developed into a very perfect and proper young woman, so that in a little time there was nothing that would have indicated to the most observant that she had not always been accus-

tomed to the life in which she now moved; nothing, unless it was her somewhat brilliant and unconventional beauty, and the perfect freedom and grace of her movements, the relic of her untrammeled life. Mrs. Mowbray grew more and more delighted with her *protégée* and never tired of declaring that Nonie was the loveliest girl she had ever known.

After a time the years upon Captiva became almost a dream to her, or rather like a memory of one's earliest and most remote childhood; and had it not been for the presence of Carl, and of Whalen, who had been so intimately associated with a portion of that time, she might have come indeed to think that it was only a dream. But they delighted in recalling the days that had been spent there together, as different for them from what they had known before, as this was strange and new to her. Carl even declared that he was for going back and joining Binder, and ending his days there in idyllic quiet. But he was deterred

from carrying this threat into execution by the charm that he found to lie in the eyes of the girl.

The life of the city soon began to pall upon the young men again, seeming even more vapid and purposeless than it had before their adventurous expedition. They discussed more than once the means by which the monotony of it might be relieved, nad just as they were trying most strenuously to decide upon some plan for accomplishing that end, a letter arrived for Whalen, from his old friend the superintendent, which helped to settle the vexed question.

"It has recently occurred to me," wrote the official, "that I may have a clue to the pirates who robbed you at Captiva. If you care enough about the matter to follow it up, and can make it convenient to come here very soon, we will consult about it and I will give you all the aid in my power toward overhauling them."

Whalen took this letter and went eagerly to Carl.

"I have never been willing to let the matter rest as it stands," he said; "I don't like to give up beaten. Let us go down there and see what he has to tell us."

"It will be a worse wild-goose chase than the other was," said Mowbray; "I cannot think he has any clue that would lead to much result."

"He is not the man to write this letter, if he has not," returned the other.

Whalen was anxious to start at once, as the desire to be revenged upon the ruffians had been burning constantly within him, and he was vastly surprised to find that Carl was less eager than himself.

"Why, it is a shame for us to give up so," he growled; "if there is any way of turning the tables, let us do it. I am going down to see what the superintendent has to say, at least."

"I don't fancy being beaten, more than you do," said Mowbray, quickly; "and I should like a chance to get even with the beggars. But—Dick—"

He paused diffidently, and waited for his companion's urging, before he continued: "Have you thought," he went on, finally, "that if we go down there, and get into a row at sea—for that is what it would probably mean—we might both get bowled over?"

At this Whalen turned sharply upon his friend, and gazed at him for a moment in undisguised amazement. Carl saw the look, and flushed hotly under it, and began to speak again. But Whalen put up his hand protestingly.

"No," he said, "I know you don't mean it in that way. But if any other man on earth, than you, Carl, had said that, I should have fancied him a coward. But I will not do you that wrong. But, tell me, what has become of your desire for a real brush with the buccaneers, that I remember you were wishing for so earnestly, not so very long ago?"

"I don't think you quite understand," said Mowbray, speaking slowly and trying to choose the right words; "and it seems out of place for me to

say it—for you are Nonie's guardian, and not I. But what would become of her, if anything should happen to us both?"

Whalen regarded his friend steadfastly for a little before he made answer to this. But in that little he discovered much; for presently he said, quietly and almost sorrowfully:

"I see—I see how it is with you, Carl. You care for Nonie." He smiled forcedly, and waited for the other to reply.

"Yes, I do care for her," said Carl, bravely, meeting his companion's eye; "and I think you do, too, Dick. And so it has come to this—that the love of a woman shall come between us."

"Ah! no, no, no, Carl, not that!" cried Whalen, quickly, putting out his hand to his friend. "Let us be men. But, I confess," and he smiled mournfully at the recollection of it, "I confess that the magic of the long moonlight nights on Captiva did work a certain madness in my blood."

At this Carl forgot his own troubles

for a moment, in sorrow for his friend. "Poor old Dick," he breathed, softly. Whalen heard, and touched his hand again with his own.

After this they were silent for a time, each fearing to make matters worse by voicing his thoughts. Mowbray was the first to speak.

"We will go," he said, "and see what this adventure will bring forth. Shall we start at once?"

"To-night, if you are ready," answered the other.

But in making ready, there was one element to deal with which neither had counted on. This was the parting with Nonie.

With all the wilfulness of a wild princess who had never been crossed in all her short life, she stoutly insisted that they should not go. There was danger in the expedition. They had no need of the treasure, even if there was a chance for its recovery, which she would not believe. Revenge was a mean motive, unworthy of them. With these, and many another like ar-

gument did she endeavour to beguile them from their purpose. But when she saw that in spite of all her pleadings they would still go, she retreated with all her dignity.

"Oh, very well, then, if you prefer that to me." With that she put out her hand in farewell nonchalantly to Mowbray, and tried to do the same to Dick. But she broke down in the effort, and flung herself upon his neck, and gave way to an abandon of grief. But Whalen brushed her cheek lightly with his lips and put her gently from him with some soothing words. Whereat Mowbray said to himself that the game was all up for him, and tried bravely in his heart to wish Dick the happiness that he so well deserved; and he swore under his breath that had the case been his, he would have stayed in spite of all the treasure and all the pirates in the southern seas.

During their long trip to the south Whalen was very quiet and absorbed, and spoke only once of Nonie to his companion.

"It would be better for her," he said, "if she cared nothing for me. I am afraid that the name of Richard Whalen will handicap me. It is a name that does not go with happy lives."

"I am afraid that I should have small chance," said Carl, ruefully, "whether you were in the race, or out of it. She let me go easily enough."

"I am not certain that I know just what that meant," returned Whalen; "women are curious in their ways, and I am not read very deeply in them."

Notwithstanding this suggestion, Mowbray refused to take any comfort to himself by thinking they might both have misunderstood Nonie, and that her parting from him was but one of maidenly reserve, while the affection shown for Whalen was only that which their cousinship warranted and made proper.

CHAPTER XVII.

It was after this conversation that a little restraint grew up between them, which both attempted most heartily and loyally to be rid of. They cared too honestly for each other to be willing that even the love of a woman should come between them, and they tried to keep the thought that it had from their minds. But the situation grew strained, and both were glad when they were at the end of their journey, and found active work there ready for them.

The superintendent greeted them warmly.

"I think I know your man," he said, "and I have an idea of how he happened to guess you out. The day you were first here, and while we were talking about your expedition, I had a

fellow on hand who had been brought in on a charge of smuggling, or other crooked work. He was here, and listened to our talk. We had no tangible proof against him, and I was compelled to let him go, with a promise to hang him if I ever ran foul of him again. When he heard you ask for a boat to take you to Captiva, he made up his mind that you were after the fabled treasure of the island—a fable that every sailor in these seas believed in, but which none of them has had the courage to search out for himself. He probably followed you as soon as he could get the right crew together to do his work, and it was a mere matter of chance that he came upon you just as he did. Now," he continued, giving new emphasis to his words, "we have something more to go on. I have reliable reports that this fellow, Manuel Garza, and his crew, have been ashore at Jamaica, and at Trinidad, and at San Lucia, and that everywhere they are lavish with their money. And the sort they

are spending is not like any current in those parts now."

The three discussed the matter at some length, the superintendent giving them continually new proofs in support of his theory that they were on the right track, and so convincing were these as to leave almost no doubt that he had the right men in view.

"Now, if you want to go," said the superintendent, in conclusion, "everything that the company can do to aid you is yours for the asking. I would have taken some steps before this, but I thought you would like to have their punishment in your own hands, as you have the best claim against them. You know the law might be a little slow to act. I would immensely like to go with you, myself, for I owe them a grudge or two, on old accounts, but I can't leave here. One thing you must make up your minds to—if you come up with them there will be a desperate fight. They are not the fellows to give in easily."

"Faith," said Mowbray, laughing, "you hardly need to tell us that. We have had one brush with them. But we will be ready for them this time. They will not catch us asleep, nor baying the moon."

The fastest steamer of the company, a neat little boat of some two hundred tons, was put at their service and speedily fitted out with a picked crew. Whalen was put in command of the expedition, with Mowbray as lieutenant, while a better sailing-master was provided than the one who had piloted them to Captiva in such hap-hazard manner.

The steamer was headed at once for Jamaica, where the men they were in search of had last been heard from. Here they learned that the man Garza had recently put in, with his companions, and had spent some days in wild orgies. During their stay they had parted with much gold which excited comment because of its strange and antique appearance. Some of this was obtained, and it left no doubt in

the minds of the pursuers that it was part of the contents of their lost chest. They followed rapidly to the south, hearing of them from point to point, where they put in, and at last getting so close upon the scent that a double lookout was posted day and night for the express purpose of giving quick word if they should come within sight of the schooner.

It was yet another week before they found that for which they sought, and every day they grew more impatient, more eager for the opportunity of paying the fellow his just dues. It was broad day when at last they were rewarded by a sight that made their hearts beat eagerly. Mowbray, standing beside the lookout, saw a sail come in sight and draw toward them, evidently not seeing the steamer. Watching it anxiously, as he did every sail that came above the horizon, he gradually became cognizant of something familiar in the appearance of the vessel. The daring way in which she was handled gave him a reminder of

the night when he and Whalen had watched the sail approaching Captiva. He sent for the latter to join him, and together they almost breathlessly waited the closer approach of the stranger. With their glasses they were able to search her decks, and were almost certain that their quest was about to be rewarded. The vessel was holding her course straight toward them, and the word was passed to make ready to attack. But just as this was done, the schooner, seeming to have become suddenly aware of the proximity of the other vessel, put sharply about and made manifest her intention of coming no nearer.

Whalen at once gave orders for putting on all steam and giving chase. Every man went to his post. The gunner stood by the howitzers which had been mounted in the bows, ready to send a sharp message to the schooner as soon as the word should be given. Arms were brought up and distributed, and grapnels placed ready in case they

should come to close enough quarters for boarding.

A prettier sight than a race at sea is never seen. It matters not if the desperate wage of life and death hangs in the balance. With the blue water beneath, and the blue sky above; with the sunlight flashing on the waves; with the breeze swelling every sail; with the spray thrown in swirling masses as the ships glide on—faster—and faster—and faster—it is a sight to make one glad that he has lived to behold it.

Whalen stood near the wheel, his arms folded, his lips parted slightly, his face smiling with the pleasure of pursuit as he saw they were steadily gaining. Perhaps there had entered into him something of the spirit of that other Richard Whalen, something of the indomitable will with which he had ever done the tasks to which he had put his hand.

Once Mowbray spoke. "I am almost sorry the race is not more even,"

he said. "Steam against wind seems hardly fair."

"They had the advantage before," answered Whalen, grimly; "this only helps make our account against them more even."

When they had drawn near enough to the schooner to make their hail heard, Whalen took the trumpet and called to them.

"Sail, ahoy!"

Receiving no answer he said quietly to the gunner:

"Give them a shot, and see if they can understand that."

In an instant a puff of smoke had leaped from the little cannon, and a ball ricocheted across the water and just beneath the schooner's prow. But no notice was taken of it, and the vessel swept gallantly on, carrying such a load of canvas that it seemed as if she could hardly stand under its weight.

The steamer plowed swiftly in her wake, gaining a little all the time. Presently the two vessels were so close

that the men could look across each other's decks, and into the faces of one another. No word was said now, but the determination of each to do battle to the very end was evidenced. The schooner's crew stood ready, bristling with arms, to repel the attack for which the others were preparing. Inch by inch the steamer drew upon its prey. The helmsman held it true and steady to its course. Now the prow of the one overlapped the other's stern, and so for a moment they swept on, drawing gradually side by side, as if in friendly rivalry. The helmsman turned his wheel ever so little, and the two boats touched, and there was an instant of confusion as they rebounded from the contact.

Again they came together, and now the grapnels were thrown out and made fast, and, on the instant, the men from the steamer began to swarm over the schooner's side and upon her deck.

Whalen and Carl led the attack, thrusting themselves to the very front

of the danger. And if in the former there was now evidence of the old freebooting strain of his ancestor, in Carl's reckless daring was a quality of courage equally to command the admiration of their followers and to strike terror to their foes.

At the schooner's rail they were met by a volley from the pistols and muskets of the pirates, but delivered at such close range that more were burned by the powder than harmed by the bullets. Before a second volley could be discharged the two crews were fighting in hand to hand conflict, with swords, cutlasses and dirks mingling with clubbed muskets, and the occasional discharge of pistols. There was a grim determination about the attacking party that warned the others to be alert if they would save themselves from the most severe punishment. So intent were all upon the business of killing that they fought in a kind of desperate silence that held no time or place for shouts or cries of encouragement, nor for heed to the

groans of the wounded, nor for much attention to what any other was doing but the one whose life was of most importance to himself.

Whalen had quickly singled out the leader of the rascally crew, recognising him as the one who had led the fight against them on Captiva, and fired by the remembrance of what they had suffered at his hands, he cut his way toward him with an energy and fierceness of purpose that left his path strewn with the victims of his hand. Mowbray, seeing that his friend was about to become detached from the rest of his supporters, just as he had been cut off that night on Captiva, gave a rallying cry to their men and closed in upon Whalen's wake. But not quickly enough did he sound the alarm, for a moment later he found that they two stood alone, the centre of a wild, blood-hungry mob who were intent upon their lives. Whalen, half turning, saw his friend beside him, and gave him a swift glance that told more than words could have done of his

affection and appreciation of his courage.

"We are in a tight box," he said grimly, watching the desperate faces about them.

"Yes," answered Carl, quietly; "this seems a chance to win our spurs. There are ten of the rogues for each of us, if there is one."

Now came the contest between skill and courage on the one side, and mere brute force and stubborn fighting on the other. With the two who were holding their own against twenty, every stroke of their swords was made to count for a life. Now side to side, again back to back, they kept their assailants at bay while they worked their path slowly step by step toward that one whom Whalen's eye never left. And when they had reached him, Whalen threw himself upon the other, and in spite of all the strength and prowess with which the ruffian defended himself, quickly laid him bleeding upon the deck.

With the loss of their leader the

courage of his followers quickly ebbed. The crew of the steamer had been so busy in their work that now there were fewer of the pirates than there had been, by half. And now they threw themselves upon these with such fury that the wretches cried for quarter; and throwing down their arms submitted to be bound, thus rendering the victory complete. The fighting, however, continued for a little in the after part of the schooner, to which the two companions had forced their way, and where they were now joined by others of their men.

And now, at the instant when victory was theirs, defeat came treading upon its heels. While the fighting had been so fierce and at such close quarters, there had been slight chance for the use of firearms, as there was quite as much danger of wounding friend as foe. But now that the deck was becoming cleared, and that the conquerors had relaxed a little of their vigilance in the temporary exultation of victory, a wretched miscreant, lying

at the last gasp of breath, drew his revolver from his belt, and taking careful aim at Whalen, sent the death dealing lead surely to do its cruel work. Carl saw, too late, the raised arm and the flash of the pistol, and had but time to drive his sword to the fellow's heart, and then turn and catch his friend in his arms as he fell.

CHAPTER XVIII.

As Carl let his companion gently down upon the deck, supporting his head against his own shoulder, he saw that the pallour of death was already creeping over the noble face. He put his hand upon his heart, to feel its pulses. Whalen saw, and shook his head feebly, and smiled at his friend.

"It is not any use," he said; "this is the end, and it is just as well. This is the way that a Richard Whalen should die." The effort of speech exhausted him and he rested a moment, and then began again: "Nonie—you will go to her—and take care of her." Then he drew his friend's ear down close to his lips, and whispered: "It was because I was her cousin—that she put her arms

about me—and let me kiss her. She did not care for me—in any other way. I—have thought it all out."

Carl did not dare trust himself to words. He pressed the dying man's hand in his own, and the other felt it, and understood, and opened his eyes for a last look at the man he loved. "It is the end; it is all right," he said: and then, "Bury me here—in the sea." And with the word, one more was added to the dead that made a charnel-house of the schooner's deck.

Carl rose to his feet and looked about him, dizzy and sick at heart at this new misfortune that had come upon him so suddenly. The glow of adventure, the spur of danger, the joy of the struggle that had sent the mad blood coursing through his veins, had gone, and in its place had come a heavy heart that weighed like lead within him, and the bright world had grown dull and grey, and he felt himself alone in it.

His men, who had watched this closing scene, stood by with grave faces,

respecting his grief. But the needs of the hour were still with them, and there was none but Carl to take the leadership. One of the men approached and saluted him, and asked for orders, and so brought him back to the time and the place. He looked about, and at once took in the whole scene as he had not during the excitement of the fight, and saw what they few had done against many. It was a wonder to him now not that Whalen was dead, but that any lived. He wished at least that Dick might have known the full measure and glory of their victory before he went.

He roused himself and gave the orders that were needed, quietly and rapidly. Then he took that which remained of his friend tenderly in his arms and carried him upon his own ship, and that night, when the stars were out, and had cast their soft glow and radiance over the sea—as Dick had always loved to see it—Mowbray said a prayer over the dead body of his more than brother, and committed

him to the grave that had been his own choice.

So heavily did Whalen's death weigh upon Carl that he had now no desire except to get away from the scene of this great tragedy. As speedily as possible he put the steamer back to port, with the captured schooner in tow. Arriving there he went at once to the superintendent, and gave him an account of what had happened. Tears were in the eyes of the rugged old man, as well as in Carl's own, before he had finished, but he was not a man to put his feelings much into words.

"I have not searched the schooner," went on Mowbray, "nor do I wish to. It has cost Dick his life, and I want nothing more to do with it. I wish you to take it, as a prize for the crew of our boat who fought so well, and divide it and its contents between them; and," he added, "I know that you will see that a right share goes to the families of those who were killed

in the fight, and to the men who are wounded. The prisoners I turn over to you."

Then he went back to the North—and to Nonie.

When he came to her, weighed down with the sorrow of his errand, not knowing what words he would find in which to tell her the awful story that he must tell, he did not at first lift his eyes to hers nor take much note of her appearance. But, little by little, he became conscious of some change in her; and then, resting his gaze full upon her, the knowledge began to dawn upon him that this was not the untutored girl of Captiva, the Nonie who had been always in his mind as she had been there, but a woman, who had wakened to a full appreciation of life and of the world. This made his task easier, though he could not have told why in words. He sat down beside her, and told her quietly and sympathetically of Whalen's death, and that his last word had been of her. He told of his splendid courage,

of the indomitable fire with which he had fought, and of how calmly and bravely he met death.

Her eyes grew dim as he told, and she spoke gently and tenderly of him, of his kindness to her, of all that he had been to her; and yet, while she talked, a glad hope sprang up in Carl's heart—a hope that in justice to the memory of his friend he tried to quell. Still, he could not help saying to himself, "This is not love—this is not love. I was mistaken—and Dick was right."

He went away by himself to reason it all out, to think out his course dispassionately. That he loved Nonie, had loved her from the very first, from those long moonlit nights on Captiva, that he loved her only the more now that he saw the splendid womanhood into which the girl had merged, he never tried to disguise from himself. But he had believed also that Whalen had loved her, and that he had meant to make her his wife. And knowing that his friend's

right was best, he had loyally endeavoured to hide his own feelings from them both. He had even thought to forget it, amid the excitement and dangers in which they had shared. When he saw his friend die, he had been filled with an unutterable sorrow because the bullet had not found himself instead of the other. He thought that would have been the best of all.

Even when Whalen, dying, said that he had thought it all out, Carl could not make himself believe that he had discovered the truth. And now, even if that was the truth, could he in loyalty to his dead friend ask Nonie to be his wife, could he try to win her for his own? If he could not try to win her from Dick while the latter lived, could he now that he was dead? He dared not trust himself to decide this question at once.

He went away, and sought in the distraction of travel, and of new scenes, to find the answer. He busied himself with the settlement of Whalen's estate, and found among his

papers such clear and ample instructions regarding every detail as forced him to think his friend had foreseen the ending of their last expedition. Everything that he had was given to Nonie, and the arrangement of these matters called him to her again.

In her presence once more, it was almost impossible to believe that this was the one-time Princess of Captiva, whose life had been so unconventional and romantic. He found that she had assimilated books and the knowledge of schools with marvellous rapidity. She had adapted herself to her new life as though she had never known any other.

He found men about her, courting her favour. And it was to this new Nonie, and not to the Nonie of Captiva, that he finally made proffer of his love. This did not seem to him Whalen's Nonie, but a bright, happy, brilliant woman for whom he had a right to contest against the whole world. He told her this at last, telling her, too, all his thoughts and

fears, all his fight to be true and loyal to his friend.

At this she let herself be taken in his arms, and laid her face blushingly upon his shoulder, and whispered:

"It could only have been you—from the first. I think he knew."

And Carl felt a great peace within him, as he understood now that it was all as his friend had wished, for the two whom he loved best of all on earth, and for whose happiness he had most willingly given up his life.

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